BRITISH COLUMBIA

Newcomers' Guide

February 2003

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Please note

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Suggestions

We welcome your suggestions and comments for future editions of the British Columbia Newcomers' Guide.

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Ministry of Community Aboriginal and Women's Services
3rd Floor, 590 West 8th Avenue
Vancouver BC V5Z 1C5 CANADA
Telephone: 604 660-2203
Fax: 604 775-0670
Website: www.gov.bc.ca/mcaws

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Ministry of Management Services
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The First Few Days

The First Few Days

- Help for newcomers
- Emergencies
- Money
- Telephones
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Help for newcomers at the airport

The Community Airport Newcomers' Network (CANN) welcomes new immigrants who arrive at the Vancouver International Airport. CANN helps newcomers get the information and services they need. It provides help in several languages. CANN is located at #280, 8191 Westminster Highway, Richmond, B.C. V6X 1A7, telephone 604 270-0077, fax 604 270-6008. E-mail: cann@lynx.bc.ca

Agencies to help immigrants

There are immigrant settlement agencies in most cities and towns in B.C. These agencies help new immigrants and refugees. Most agencies have interpreters and counsellors. They may also do translations. These agencies may help with immigration problems. They may also help new immigrants find jobs, housing, or English classes. See the listing at the end of this chapter for immigrant settlement agencies in your area.

Family and community services societies often help new immigrants also. Look in the front of the White Pages of the telephone book in the "Community Services" section for information on family and community services societies in your area.

Adjusting to life in Canada

Most people are excited about their new life when they first arrive in Canada. But after a short time, they may feel worried and irritable because it is often difficult to find jobs, housing, and schools. Also, learning a new language is not easy. Some people may be unable to sleep, or they may have stomach problems or headaches. It may help to talk over these problems with family, friends, a doctor, or a counsellor at an immigrant settlement agency. See the listing of agencies at the end of this chapter.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada Call Centre

You can get general information about citizenship and immigration by telephoning Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Call Centre. By pressing numbers on a touch-tone telephone you can hear information on permanent residence and refugee claims. You can also hear immigration information about visiting Canada, working or studying in Canada, and sponsoring a relative. Information on becoming a citizen is also available from the Call Centre. If you need more information, you can speak to someone at this number. In Vancouver, the number to call is 604 666-2171. Elsewhere in British Columbia, call 1-888-242-2100. Website: www.cic.gc.ca

Where to stay when you arrive

Government-sponsored refugees can stay free for a short time at Immigrant Services Society's Welcome House in Vancouver. If there is extra space, new immigrants or refugee claimants may also stay here, but they have to pay.

Many immigrants stay in hotels or motels at first if they don't have relatives or friends here. Most hotels and motels in city centres are expensive. Motels outside the city centre may be cheaper. The YMCA and YWCA have low-cost rooms in some cities.

Checklist of things to do right away:

- Apply for a Social Insurance Number (see the chapter on "Finding a Job").
- Register for health insurance (see the chapter on "Health Care").
- If you have no money to live on, you may apply for financial help from the provincial government (see the next section on "Social assistance").
- Apply for the Child Tax Benefit for children under 18 years old. The federal government sends monthly cheques to some families. The cheque is usually sent to the mother. If you are a low income working family with children, you may be eligible for the B.C. Benefits Family Bonus. To find out about these benefits, call 1-800-387-1193.

- Register children for school (see the chapter on "Education").

Income assistance (Welfare)

What if you have no job and no money to live on?

Government-sponsored refugees may get financial help from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. For information, contact an immigrant settlement agency or the Citizenship and Immigration Canada Call Centre.

Some immigrants and refugee claimants may qualify for financial assistance from the provincial government. This help is called welfare, or B.C. Employment & Assistance, or income assistance. To find out if you are eligible, contact the nearest Employment & Assistance Centre. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book in the Government of British Columbia section under "Human Resources – Ministry of, Employment & Assistance Centres."

Food banks

Many communities in B.C. have food banks for people who need emergency food. Each food bank has different rules. Check before you go. To find the food bank in your area, look in the White Pages of the telephone book under "Food Bank."

Food banks are not run by the government. People in the community donate the food. If you want to donate food, there are boxes in many food stores, churches, and other places.

Canadian money

There are 100 cents in one dollar. Common bills (paper money) are $5, $10, $20, $50, and $100.

Coins used in Canada are $2 ("toonie"), $1 ("loonie"), $0.25 ("quarter"), $0.10 ("dime"), $0.05 ("nickel") and $0.01 ("penny").

Emergencies

In most places, the emergency phone number for FIRE, POLICE, and AMBULANCE is 911. Check inside the front cover of your telephone book.

Telephone books

Telephone books can be very useful. They are divided into several sections.

- The front pages have area codes, emergency numbers and community information.
- The White Pages list the names, addresses, and phone numbers of people and businesses. These are listed in alphabetical order.
- The Blue Pages list government offices. The Government of Canada is listed first, then the Government of British Columbia, then your city or town (municipal) government.
- The Yellow Pages (sometimes a separate book) list businesses under the type of business or work, such as doctors, restaurants, or pharmacies.

If you cannot find a number in the telephone book, you can dial Directory Assistance (dial 411 for local numbers, 1-800-555-1212 for long distance numbers). There is a charge for this service if you call from home. The Directory Assistance numbers are in the first pages of your telephone book.

Telephones

Coin-operated pay phones cost 25 cents per local call. You can talk as long as you wish. On private phones, there is no extra charge for each local call. At a hotel or motel, you may have to pay an extra charge for each call you make from your room.

Telephone numbers beginning with 1-800, 1-888, or 1-877 are "toll free" numbers, which means that you do not have to pay for the call.

Telephone numbers beginning with 1-900 are "pay per call" numbers, which means that you will be charged for the call. These calls are often very expensive.

Long distance calls

From a pay phone, dial:

- 0 + 604 + local number (in the Lower Mainland area);
- 0 + 250 + local number (in the rest of British Columbia outside of Lower Mainland);

- 0 + area code + local number (Canada, United States, Mexico, the Caribbean);
- 01 + country code + routing code + local number (overseas).

The operator tells you how much money to put into the telephone. If you want the person you are calling to pay, tell the operator you want to make a "collect" call.

It is cheaper to dial directly from a private phone. It may also be cheaper to make long distance calls on weekends, weekday evenings and on some holidays in North America. Look in the first pages of your telephone book for information about rates and types of calls. If there is something you do not understand, you can ask the operator for help. Dial 0 (zero) for the operator.

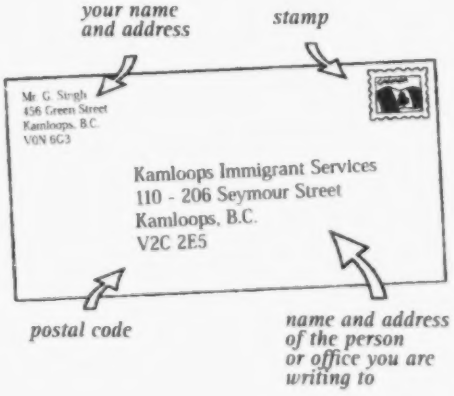
Answering machines and voice mail

Many people have answering machines or voice mail on their telephones. When you hear the message, wait for the beep. After the beep, leave your name, phone number, and a message.

Post office

You can send mail from a regular post office or a small post office in a store. You can put letters (with stamps) in any red mailbox on the street. All mail destined in Canada must include a postal code.

If you do not know the postal code for a letter you are sending, you can look up the code in a book at any post office, or on the Canada Post website www.canadapost.ca. You can also call Canada Post's Information service at 1-900-565-2633. There is a charge for this service. For other information about Canada Post, you can call 1-800-267-1177.



Postage required on letters

- $0.48 in Canada
- $0.65 to the United States
- $1.25 to other countries
- Bigger envelopes and heavier letters cost more.

Parcels

If you mail a parcel (package) out of Canada, you have to fill in a customs form at the post office. Write what is in the parcel and how much it cost.

Registered mail

You can send important mail "registered." The person who receives the mail has to sign for it. Registered mail costs extra. You can also insure letters and parcels.

Fast mail

You can pay extra to have your mail delivered quickly (within one to three days). Ask at your post office about faster services. Private courier companies also deliver letters and packages quickly. Look in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Courier Service."

Getting around town

In many B.C. cities, streets are numbered in increasing order from the centre of the city, or from the water, or other geographical landmark. For example, 18th Street is one block after 17th Street. Buildings are usually numbered in the same way.

Bookstores and newsstands sell city maps. You can get free B.C. road maps and information at the nearest Travel Infocentre. In Vancouver, call 604 683-2000 or 604 663-6000 for travel information. Outside of Vancouver, dial 1-800-663-6000.

City buses

Most cities have bus systems. Buses pick up people at bus stops only. People get on the bus at the front door and get off at the back door. If you want the bus driver to let you off at the next bus stop, pull the cord above your seat. In most cities, you need exact change or a monthly pass. There is no extra cost to transfer (within 90 minutes) from one bus to another. You must ask for a transfer from the driver when you pay your fare.

If you take the bus a lot it may be cheaper to buy a monthly pass. Elementary and high school students, disabled people, some people on welfare, and full-time university and college students pay a lower price if they have bought a special pass ahead of time. Passes are sold at the beginning and end of each month at businesses that have a "FareDealer" sign. Children under five years old ride free when with an adult. Seniors over the age of 65 pay a lower price by showing their medical CareCard (see the chapter on "Health Care") or any identification (ID) showing their age.

The Vancouver area has SkyTrain (rail) and SeaBus (boat) as well as buses. You can transfer from buses to SkyTrain or SeaBus, or from these services to buses, without paying again. In order to do this, you must keep the paper transfer. Some long trips cost more. For information about routes and costs, phone the transit system. Look in the White Pages of the telephone book under "Transit Information" or "BC Transit." In Greater Vancouver, you can also call "Translink."

Taxis

Taxis are convenient, but they can be expensive. Most large cities and some small towns have taxi companies. You can order a taxi by telephone. Look in the Yellow Pages of the phone book under "Taxicabs." The meter shows how much to pay. People usually tip the driver (give the driver more money than the fare).

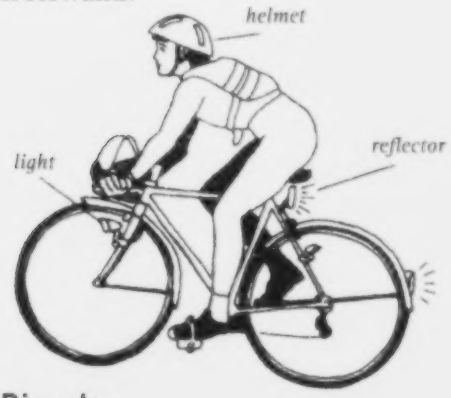
Transportation for people with disabilities

People in wheelchairs can get on some buses, and some taxis take wheelchairs. In many cities and towns, vans pick up people with disabilities for a minimal fee at their homes. Phone three or four days before for a reservation. Look in the White Pages of the telephone book under "handyDART."

Walking

You should cross streets only at the corner and obey traffic lights. It is against the law to cross in the middle of a block. This is called "jaywalking." If the police see you jaywalking, you may have to pay a fine. Many corners have crosswalks. These are white lines painted on the road. Cars should stop at crosswalks to let

people cross. Pedestrians have the "right of way" over cars at crosswalks.



Bicycles

You don't need a licence to ride a bicycle. Bicycles must obey the same rules as cars. Only one person may ride a bicycle, except for a small child in a special seat on the back. You must have a light in front and a red reflector on the back of your bicycle if you ride at night. The law says everyone who rides a bicycle must wear a helmet (except Sikhs who wear a turban for religious reasons).

Cars

You need a licence to drive a car in B.C. For information on licences, buying a car, and getting car insurance, see the chapter on "Cars and Driving."

Travel between cities

You can travel by airplane to most cities in British Columbia. From Vancouver, major airlines fly to most cities around the globe. Small airlines fly to smaller cities in British Columbia and western Canada. Phone an airline company or talk to a travel agent for information on air travel. Look in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Airlines" or under "Travel Agencies."

Buses travel between towns and cities throughout British Columbia. For route and schedule information, look in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Bus Lines."

Trains stop in many cities and towns in B.C. There are two railway passenger routes in B.C. They are:

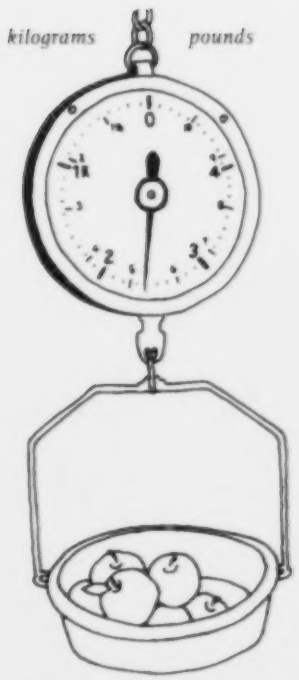
- between Victoria and Courtenay on Vancouver Island;
- east from Vancouver through Kamloops to Alberta and other provinces.

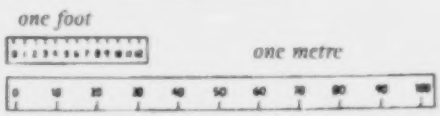
For information on trains going north to Prince George, call B.C. Rail at 604 984-5246. For information on trains going east and on Vancouver Island, call VIA Rail at 1-800-561-8630.

Ferries connect Vancouver with cities on Vancouver Island, such as Victoria and Nanaimo. Other ferries go to small coastal islands. On some routes, reservations are recommended. Ferries also cross some lakes and rivers in B.C. For information on ferries, look in the White Pages of the telephone book under "British Columbia Ferry Corp."

Metric and imperial measure

People in Canada use both metric and imperial measurement. Some stores have prices marked in both measurement systems, and others use just one system.





Shopping

Most stores open around 9 or 10 a.m. and close by 6 p.m. Some stores may be open late in the evening.

Convenience stores are usually open all night. Some small stores are closed on Sundays, but most grocery stores and department stores are

open. In general, bargaining for a lower price is not done in stores that sell new merchandise.

Refunds and exchanges

What if you buy something and later you decide you don't want it? Stores don't have to take things back, but some stores will return your money or exchange things. You need the receipt to do this.

Secondhand stores

Secondhand stores sell used clothing or furniture, often very cheaply. You can often bargain to bring down the price.

Where to go for help

Immigrant Settlement Agencies

ABBOTSFORD

Abbotsford Community Services
2420 Montrose Avenue
Abbotsford, B.C. V2S 3S9
Tel: 604 859-7681 Fax: 604 859-6334
www.abbotsfordcommunityservices.com

BURNABY

Burnaby Multicultural Society
6255 Nelson Avenue
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4T5
Tel: 604 431-4131 Fax: 604 431-4137
www.bby-multicultural.ca

Vancouver and Lower Mainland
Multicultural Family Support Services Society
306 - 4980 Kingsway
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4K7
Tel: 604 436-1025 Fax: 604 436-3267
www.vlmfss.ca

CAMPBELL RIVER

Campbell River and Area Multicultural and
Immigrant Services Association
43 - 1480 Dogwood Street
Campbell River, B.C. V9W 3A6
Tel: 250 830-0171 Fax 250 830-1010
www.misa.crcn.net

CHILLIWACK

Chilliwack Community Services
46293 Yale Road
Chilliwack, B.C. V2P 2P7
Tel: 604 792-7376 Fax: 604 792-6575
www.comserv.bc.ca

COQUITLAM

SUCCESS Burnaby-Coquitlam Service Centre
B - 435 North Road
Coquitlam, B.C. V3K 3V9
Tel: 604 936-5900 Fax: 604 936-7280
www.success.bc.ca

SUCCESS Tri-City Office
2058 - 1163 Pinetree Way
Coquitlam, B.C. V3B 8A9
Tel: 604 468-6000 Fax: 604 464-6830
www.success.bc.ca

COURTENAY

Comox Valley Family Services Association
1415 Cliffe Avenue
Courtenay, B.C. V9N 2K6
Tel: 250 338-7575 Fax: 250 338-2343
E-mail: cvfsa@home.com

Comox Valley Multicultural and Immigrant Support Society
Tel: 250 338-2838 or 250 703-0636

DUNCAN

Cowichan Valley Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society
3 - 83 Trunk Road
Duncan, B.C. V9L 2N7
Tel: 250 748-3112 Fax: 250 748-1335
E-mail: cviias@shaw.ca

KAMLOOPS

Kamloops Immigrant Services
110 - 206 Seymour Street
Kamloops, B.C. V2C 2E5
Tel: 250 372-0855 Fax: 250 372-1532
www.kamloopsimmigrantservices.net

KELOWNA

Multicultural Society of Kelowna
100 - 1875 Spall Road
Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 4R2
Tel: 250 762-2155 Fax: 250 762-8155

KITIMAT

Kitimat Multicultural Society
P.O. Box 16
Kitimat, B.C. V8C 2G6
Tel: 250 632-6846

LANGLEY

Langley Family Services
5339 - 207th Street
Langley, B.C. V3A 2E6
Tel: 604 534-7921 Fax: 604 534-9884

NANAIMO

Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
114 - 285 Prideaux Street
Nanaimo, B.C. V9R 2N2
Tel: 250 753-6911 Fax: 250 753-4250
www.island.net/~cvims

PENTICTON

Penticton and District Multicultural Society
508 Main Street
Penticton, B.C. V2A 5C7
Tel: 250 492-6299 Fax: 250 490-4684
E-mail: pdms@telus.net

PRINCE GEORGE

Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society of Prince George
1633 Victoria Street
Prince George, B.C. V2L 2L4
Tel: 250 562-2900 Fax: 250 563-4852
E-mail: imss@mag-net.com

RICHMOND

SUCCESS Richmond Office
220 - 7000 Minoru Blvd.
Richmond, B.C. V6Y 3Z5
Tel: 604 279-7180 Fax: 604 279-7188
www.success.bc.ca

Richmond Multicultural Concerns Society
210-7000 Minoru Blvd.
Richmond, B.C. V6Y 3Z5
Tel: 604 279-7160 Fax: 604 279-7168
www.rmcs.bc.ca

SURREY

Options: Services to Communities Society
100 - 6846 King George Highway
Surrey, B.C. V3W 4Z9
Tel: 604 596-4321 Fax: 604 572-7413
www.options.bc.ca

Progressive Inter-Cultural Community
Services Society
109 - 12414 - 82nd Avenue
Surrey, B.C. V3W 3E9
Tel: 604 596-7722 Fax: 604 596-7721
www.picssociety.com

Surrey-Delta Immigrant Services Society
1107 - 7330 137 Street
Surrey, B.C. V3W 1A3
Tel: 604 597-0205 Fax: 604 597-4299

SUCCESS Surrey-Delta Service Centre
A7 The Boardwalk Place
10160 - 152nd Street
Surrey, B.C. V3R 9W3
Tel: 604 588-6869 Fax: 604 588-6823
www.success.bc.ca

TRAIL

Trail and District Multicultural Society
201 - 1504 Cedar Avenue
Trail, B.C. V1R 4C6
Tel: 250 364-0999 Fax: 250 364-0945

VANCOUVER

Inland Refugee Society of B.C.
101 - 225 East 17th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V5V 1A6
Tel: 604 873-6660 Fax: 604 873-6620

Immigrant Services Society of B.C.
501 - 333 Terminal Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V6A 2L7
Tel: 604 684-2561 Fax: 604 684-2266
www.issbc.org

Immigrant Services Society Welcome House
530 Drake Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 2H3
Tel: 604 684-7498 Fax: 604 684-5683
www.issbc.org

MOSAIC
2nd floor, 1720 Grant Street
Vancouver, B.C. V5L 2Y7
Tel: 604 254-9626 Fax: 604 254-3932
www.mosaicbc.com

Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
Suite 205 - 2929 Commercial Drive
Vancouver, B.C. V5N 4C8
Tel: 604 298-5888 Fax: 604 298-0747
www.pirs.bc.ca

SUCCESS
28 West Pender Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1R6
Tel: 604 684-1628 Fax: 604 408-7236
www.success.bc.ca

SUCCESS
5836 Fraser Street
Vancouver, B.C. V5W 2Z5
Tel: 604 324-1900 Fax: 604 324-2536
www.success.bc.ca

VERNON

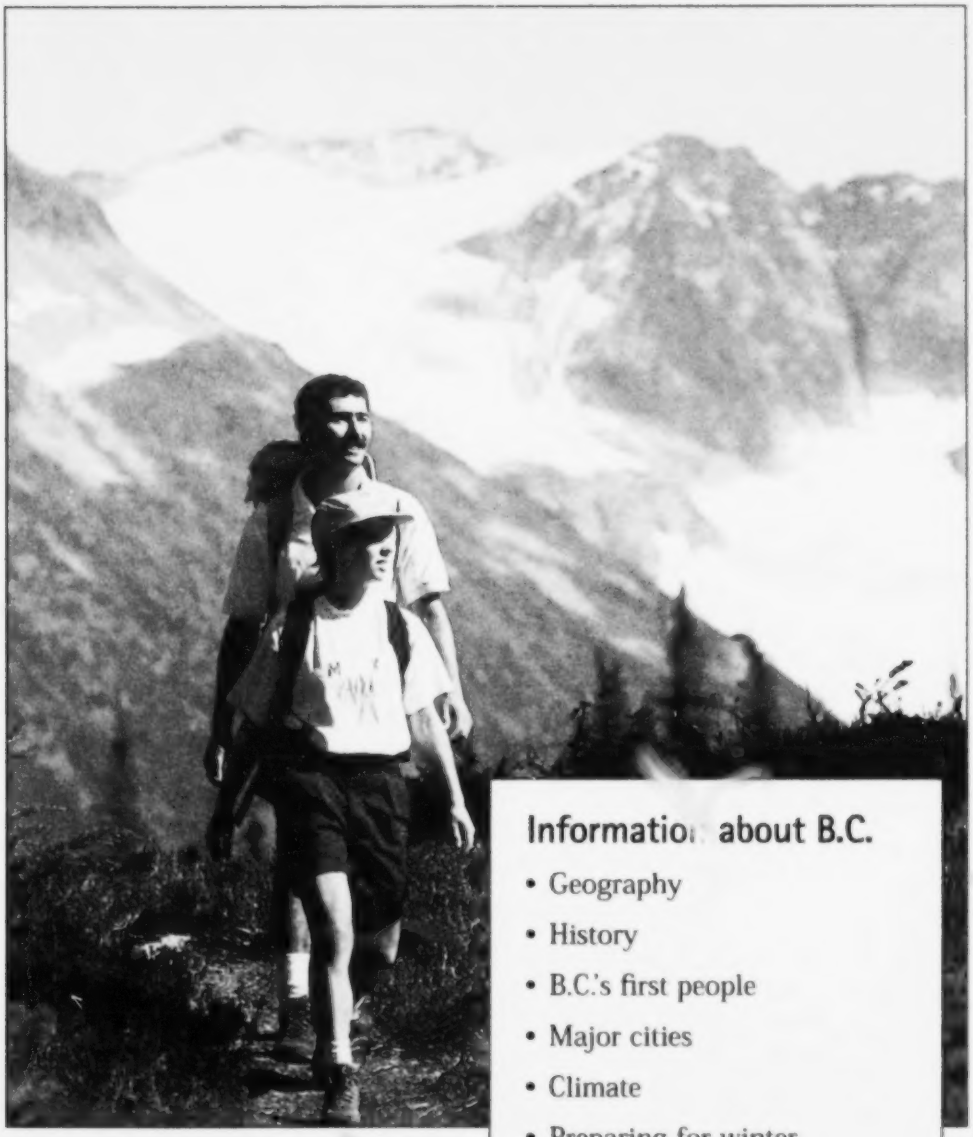
Vernon and District Immigrant Services Society
100 - 3003 - 30th Street
Vernon, B.C. V1T 9J5
Tel: 250 542-4177 Fax: 250 542-6554
www.futuresbc.com/cap/immigrantservices

VICTORIA

Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria
930 Balmoral Road
Victoria, B.C. V8T 1A8
Tel: 250 388-4728 Fax: 250 386-4395
www.icavictoria.org

Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society
3rd Floor - 535 Yates Street
Victoria, B.C. V8W 2Z6
Tel: 250 361-9433 Fax: 250 361-1914
www.vircs.bc.ca

Information about B.C.



Information about B.C.

- Geography
- History
- B.C.'s first people
- Major cities
- Climate
- Preparing for winter

Geography

British Columbia (B.C.) is one of Canada's ten provinces. It is a very large province—larger than many countries in the world. For example, it is four times larger than Great Britain.

B.C. is on the Pacific coast of Canada. It is a land of mountains, rivers, and forests. The Rocky Mountains are in the eastern part of the province. The Coast Mountains are near the Pacific Ocean. Forests cover large areas of the province. Much of British Columbia is rugged and wild, with few roads and towns. In many areas, people must drive long distances from town to town.

Most British Columbians live in the southern part of the province, close to the border with the United States. This area, from West Vancouver to Mission, from South Delta to Aldergrove and including all the municipalities inside this area, is called the "Lower Mainland."

Industry

Forestry, along with Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate, are the leading industrial sectors in B.C. The next most important sectors of the economy are the Retail and Wholesale Trade; Business, Personal, and Other Services; and Transportation, Storage and Communications.

Tourism, mining, fishing, and farming are also important.

History

Native people have lived in the area that is now called British Columbia for thousands of years. They were here when the first European explorers arrived.

British and Spanish explorers began to visit the coast in the 1700s. The British explorer George Vancouver arrived in 1792. Vancouver Island

and the city of Vancouver are named after him.

Other European explorers came to the Pacific coast by land. They travelled by canoe and on foot. One of these early explorers was Simon Fraser. The Fraser River is named after him.

People found gold along the Fraser River in 1857. Thousands of people came to B.C. to look for gold.

In 1867, the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia joined together to form Canada. British Columbia joined Canada in 1871. At that time, only 36,000 people lived in B.C. More than 25,000 were native people.

Between 1880 and 1885, workers built the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) across Canada. The CPR joined the country from east to west.

Since 1885, B.C. has grown quickly. In the last 100 years, people from all over the world have come here to live. In 2001, the total population of B.C. was about 4.1 million.

B.C.'s first people

About five per cent of the people in B.C. are native. Native people live in cities and towns. They also live on reserves. B.C.'s first people are sometimes called Indians. They usually prefer to be called native people, First Nations people or aboriginal people.

Native people in British Columbia belong to many cultural groups. They speak different languages. They have different histories, traditions, and lifestyles.

Major cities

Vancouver is Canada's third-largest city. It is an important port and business centre. More than 2 million people live in and around Vancouver.

Victoria is the capital city of the province. It is on Vancouver Island. The B.C. government meets in Victoria.

Kelowna is in the interior of the province. This city on Lake Okanagan is the centre of a large fruit-growing and wine-producing area.

Prince George is in the north. It is an important centre for B.C.'s forest industry.

Some other B.C. cities are Kamloops, Nanaimo, Fort St. John, and Fort Nelson.

Climate

British Columbia has four seasons:

- Winter (December to February);
- Spring (March to May);
- Summer (June to August);
- Fall (September to November).

The climate is different from place to place in B.C.

The coast has a mild climate all year around. Summers are warm, and winters are rainy and mild.

The interior, or central area of the province, is usually cold and snowy in the winter. Summers are hot and sunny.

In the north, winters are long and cold with lots of snow. Summers are short.

Preparing for winter

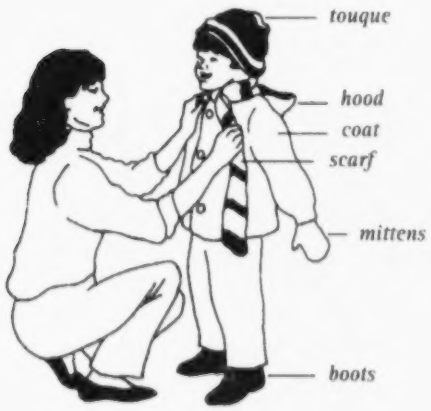
Winters along the coast are usually very rainy. You will need an umbrella, raincoat, and rain boots.

In the interior and northern regions, winters can be very cold. It is important to wear warm winter clothing when you are outside. Most people wear thick coats or jackets, scarves, hats, and gloves or mitts.

If it is snowing, boots will keep your feet warm and dry. Many people wear boots outside and take shoes to wear indoors at work or school.

On very cold days, some people wear special underwear under their clothes. This underwear is made from warm materials.

Children usually feel cold more than adults. It is important to dress children warmly in winter.

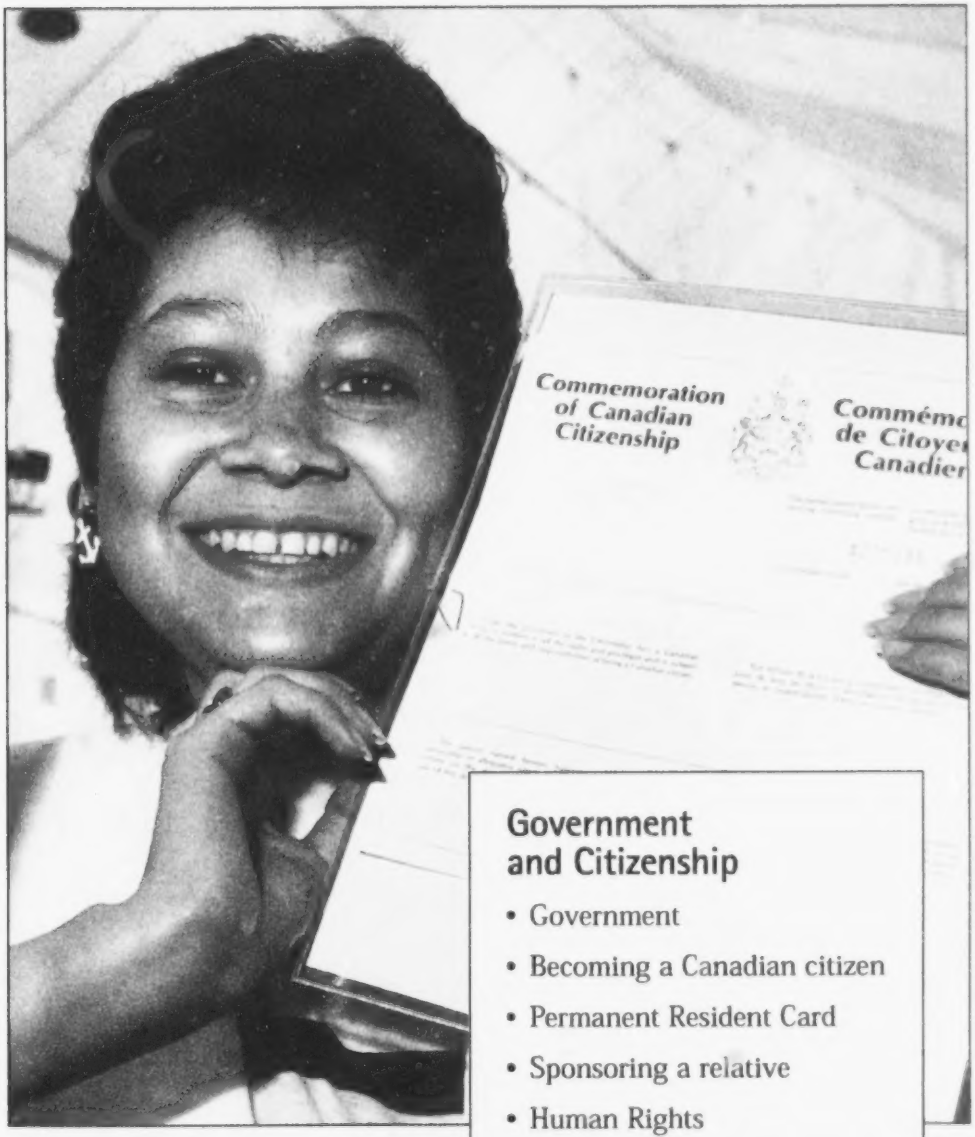


Where to go for help

To get more information about British Columbia:

- Ask at your local library for books and maps of B.C.
- Contact your nearest Government Agents office. Look in the Blue Pages of the phone book. Find the Government of B.C. section. Look under "Government Agents."
- Visit B.C. Stats: www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

Government and Citizenship



Government and Citizenship

- Government
- Becoming a Canadian citizen
- Permanent Resident Card
- Sponsoring a relative
- Human Rights
- Multiculturalism

Government

Canada has three levels of government: federal, provincial, and municipal. These governments are all elected by the citizens of Canada.

Federal Government (Government of Canada)

The federal government has responsibilities such as immigration, defence, and trade with other countries. The names and telephone numbers of federal government departments are in the Blue Pages of the telephone book under "Government of Canada."

There is also a Reference Canada toll-free number at 1-800-622-6232, where you can get information on how to contact federal government departments and agencies. This information is available in English and French, Canada's two official languages.

Provincial Government (Government of British Columbia)

Canada is divided into ten provinces and three territories. Each province and territory has its own government. The responsibilities of provincial governments include education, highways, and hospitals. The names and telephone numbers of provincial government departments are in the Blue Pages of the telephone book under "Government of British Columbia," or look on their website: www.gov.bc.ca

There is also an Enquiry BC number to get contact information on provincial government departments at 604 660-2421 in the Lower Mainland, 250 387-6121 in Victoria, and at 1-800-663-7867 elsewhere in B.C. Operators at this number can transfer you toll-free to government offices which are long-distance from your calling area.

Municipal Government

The government of a city, town, or village is called a municipal government. This level of government is responsible for fire protection, recreation, city streets, and other local matters. The municipal government telephone numbers are in the Blue Pages of the telephone book under "Municipalities."

Regional Districts

Most municipalities belong to one of 28 regional districts in British Columbia. These regional districts govern services such as water, sewage and garbage disposal.

Becoming a Canadian citizen

After three or more years in Canada, immigrants may apply for Canadian citizenship. Immigrants who become citizens have the same rights as citizens who were born in Canada.

The Canadian government allows dual citizenship. This means you can be a Canadian citizen and a citizen of another country.

Citizenship requirements

NOTE: A new *Citizenship Act* may soon become law. The requirements below may change under this new law.

To become a Canadian citizen:

- You must be 18 years old or older;
- You must be a permanent resident (landed immigrant);
- You must have lived in Canada as a permanent resident for three of the last four years;
- You must speak some English or French;
- You must know something about Canada's history, geography, and political system. You must also know your rights and responsibilities as a citizen of Canada;
- You must have a clean record with the police and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC);
- You must take the oath of citizenship.

Parents must apply for children who are under 18 years old. Parents may apply for citizenship for themselves and their children at the same time.

Applying for Canadian citizenship

To apply for Canadian citizenship, call the Citizenship & Immigration Canada Call Centre at 604 666-2171 or 1-888-242-2100. You can also go to their website: v . cic.gc.ca

Ask for an "Application for Citizenship" forms package. You will need an application form for each adult and child in your family. Complete the application form(s), attach all the necessary documents and fees, and mail the application to the Citizenship Case Processing Centre in Sydney, Nova Scotia. The address is on the forms package.

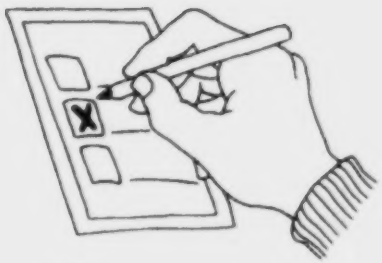
If you need more information on how to become a Canadian citizen, call the Citizenship & Immigration Canada Call Centre or a local immigrant settlement agency (see listing in the chapter on "The First Few Days").

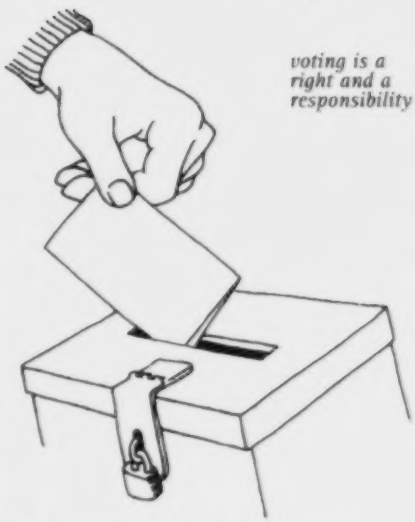
Citizenship classes

You may want to join a citizenship class to help you prepare for the citizenship test. For more information, call your local immigrant settlement agency, school, community college, or library.

Rights and responsibilities

Canadian citizens have certain rights and responsibilities. For example, voting is both a right and a responsibility. Here are some other rights of Canadian citizens:





voting is a right and a responsibility

- You may live in any province of Canada.
- You may have a Canadian passport.
- You may leave and return to Canada freely.
- You may own any type of property.
- You may hold any job for which you are qualified.

Here are some important responsibilities:

- You must obey the laws of Canada.
- You must pay taxes.
- You should respect the rights of others.
- You should serve on a jury in a court if you are asked.
- You should respect the environment. This means you should not litter or pollute the environment.
- You should use Canada's social services, such as employment insurance and social assistance, responsibly.

Leaving Canada

Permanent residents must live in Canada for three years, or 1,095 days in a four-year period, before they can apply for citizenship. However, they can leave Canada for short holidays or family visits. This is allowed if their home is in Canada, and they plan to return. The time spent outside Canada does not count toward those three years.

Permanent residents who are outside Canada because they have decided not to make Canada their home may lose their permanent resident status.

Permanent Resident Card

The Permanent Resident Card (PR Card) is a new, wallet-size, plastic card. If you complete the Canadian immigration process and obtain permanent resident status, but are not a Canadian citizen, you will get the PR Card by mail. People who have already obtained permanent resident status can apply for the new PR Card. The PR Card replaces the IMM 1000 as the document needed by Canadian permanent residents re-entering Canada. For more information contact the Citizenship & Immigration Canada Call Centre at 604 666-2171 or 1-888-242-2100. Website: www.cic.gc.ca/english/pr-card/

Deportation

Sometimes the Canadian government orders permanent residents to leave Canada permanently. This is called "deportation."

Here are some of the reasons why people may be deported:

- They were convicted of a serious crime before they came to Canada,

and they didn't tell Citizenship and Immigration Canada about it.

- They were convicted of a serious crime while in Canada.
- They lied or used false documents to enter Canada.
- They were involved in organized crime.
- They were engaged in terrorism.

What if the Canadian government decides to deport someone? That person should get information about immigration laws from a Citizenship and Immigration Canada Call Centre. There are also lawyers who specialize in immigration laws. Look in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Lawyers," or see the contact information in the chapter on the "Legal System."

Sponsoring a relative

If you are a permanent resident or a Canadian citizen, you may sponsor (help) your spouse, common-law partner, child, parent or another family member under the legislation to come to live in Canada. To do this, you must be 18 years old or older. You must prove that you have enough money to take care of your relative(s) while they settle in Canada. For information on which relatives you can sponsor and the application costs, check with the Citizenship and Immigration Canada Call Centre.

Human rights

British Columbia and Canada have human rights laws that protect people from many kinds of discrimination.

It is discrimination if someone does not give you a job or a place to live because they don't like your age, race, ethnic or national origin, skin colour, family or marital status, religion, disability, sex, or sexual orientation. It is also discrimination for hotels, restaurants, or other service businesses to refuse service to anyone on the above grounds.

You can get help if you have a problem with discrimination. If your problem is with a bank, telecommunications or transportation company, or federal government department, call the Canadian Human Rights Commission. They are listed in the White Pages of the telephone book. In Vancouver, the number is 604 666-2251. Elsewhere, the number is 1-800-999-6899.

If your problem is with a landlord, a local business or service, or a provincial government department or agency, call a provincial human rights agency. The future of the B.C. Human Rights Commission has not been determined at the time of printing this book. For more information, please contact the B.C. Human Rights Commission at 604 660-6811, 250 387-3710 or 1-800-663-0876. Or contact the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal at 604 775-2000 or 1-888-440-8844.

Multiculturalism

Canada is a multicultural country. The government encourages people to take pride in their language, religion, and culture. It also encourages all Canadians to treat each other with respect.

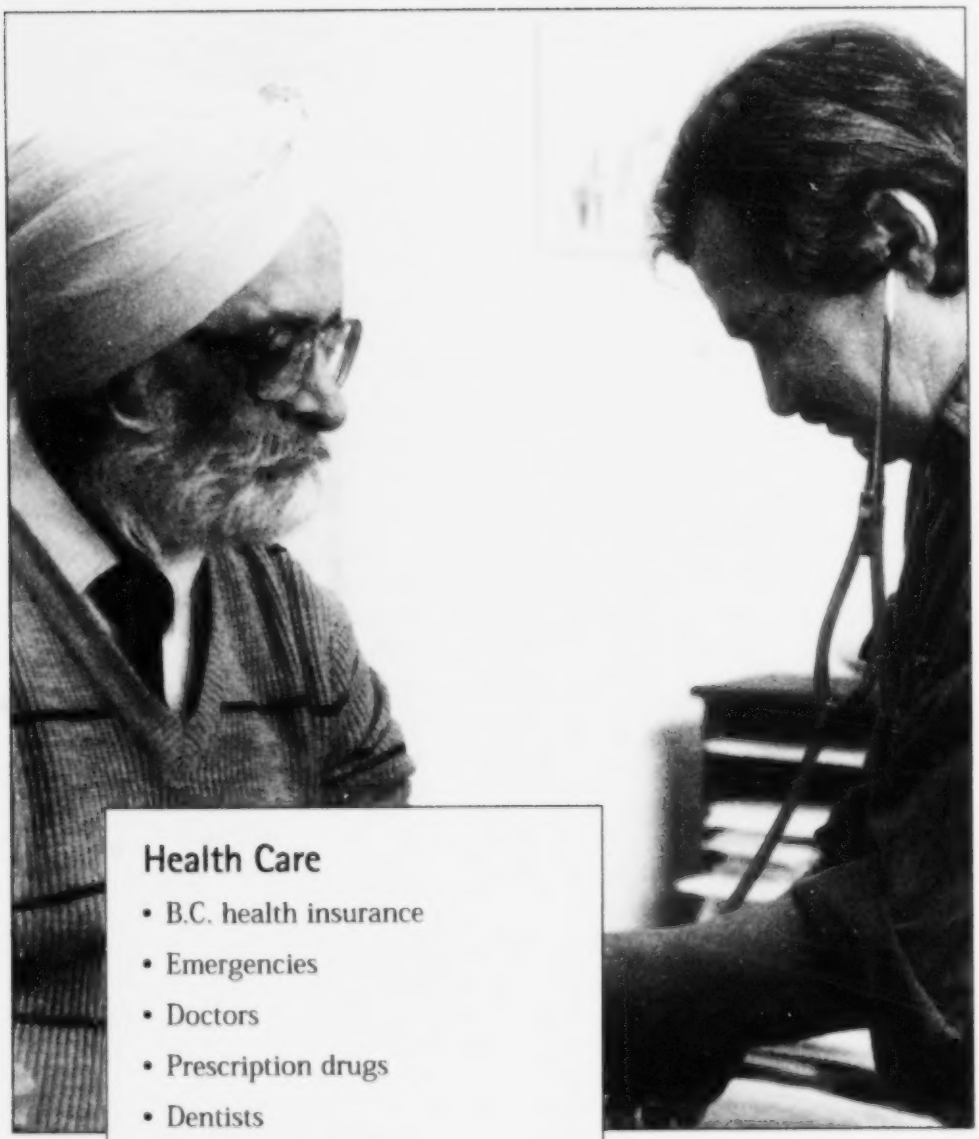
People living in Canada have a responsibility to contribute to our society. You can start by taking part in your community. Here are some ways you can do this:

- Meet your neighbours.
- Join in neighbourhood activities.
- Go to meetings in your community or at your children's school.
- Volunteer in your community.

Volunteering

Volunteering is an important part of Canadian life. A volunteer helps people without getting paid. Most communities need volunteers. You can help at your children's school, at a local hospital, or at a community agency. Look in the front pages of the telephone book in the "Community Services" section, under "Volunteering," or ask at your local library.

Health Care



Health Care

- B.C. health insurance
- Emergencies
- Doctors
- Prescription drugs
- Dentists
- Public health units

B.C. health insurance

The Government of British Columbia has a hospital insurance and a medical insurance plan. These plans are for British Columbia residents only. Canadian citizens, landed immigrants and convention refugees are all eligible.

Registering for health insurance

You do not need to register or pay for hospital insurance. To receive insurance through the Medical Services Plan (MSP), for medical services including doctors' fees, you must register. If you don't, you will have to pay for these services yourself, and you may find the cost very high.

It is important to register for medical insurance as soon as you arrive in British Columbia. Phone an MSP office to find out how. In Vancouver, call 604 683-7151. In Victoria, call 250 386-7171 or 250 382-8406. Elsewhere in B.C., call 1-800-663-7100.

After registering, you will not get insurance protection immediately; you will need to complete a waiting period that includes the rest of the month in which you became a resident of British Columbia, plus two months. You should get temporary insurance from a private company for the waiting period. Look in the Yellow Pages of the phone book under "Insurance Companies – Other Than Life."

When your MSP coverage begins, everyone in your family will get a "CareCard." People 65 years old and older get a special Gold CareCard. Each card has the person's name and a personal health number. Sign your card, and always take it with you when you visit a doctor or hospital.

Health insurance fees

MSP insurance coverage is not free. You must pay a monthly fee. The costs per month are different if you are:

- a single person
- a family of two
- a family of three or more.

Phone an MSP office to find out about costs.

Some government-sponsored refugees are eligible for free MSP coverage. Check with the

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) Call Centre or an immigrant settlement agency (see the listing in the first chapter).

If you have a job, your payments may be taken off your pay cheque.

What if you don't have much money? You may be able to pay less money for health insurance if you have lived in Canada for more than one year. Contact an MSP office for more information.

Refugee claimants

Refugee claimants do not have CareCards, but they may need to see a doctor.

If a problem is urgent, refugee claimants can get medical attention for specific conditions with the "Interim Federal Health" paper issued to them by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The Canadian government will pay the costs.

Emergencies

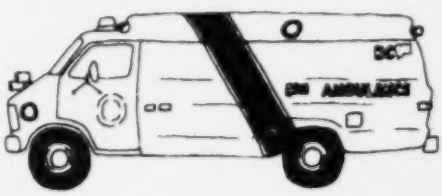
What if you have an accident or suddenly get very sick? You should go to the Emergency Department of a hospital. Many of these are open 24 hours a day. If you need an interpreter, it is a good idea to take a family member or a friend who can speak English.

Calling an ambulance

If you need an ambulance, call 911 or the emergency phone number in your area. This number is usually at the front of the telephone book.

Ask for an ambulance. The ambulance will take you to the Emergency Department.

MSP will not pay for an ambulance. If you go in the ambulance, you will have to pay for it. You don't have to pay right away.



Hospital costs

You don't have to pay for hospital costs if you are a permanent resident. If you are a refugee claimant, you must get the "Interim Federal Health" paper from the Citizenship and Immigration Canada office to go to a hospital. The Canadian government will pay the hospital costs.

Types of doctors

There are two types of doctors in British Columbia: family doctors and specialists.

Family doctors take care of most medical problems. You can also talk to your family doctor about family planning, nutrition, and emotional problems.

Specialists treat special health problems, such as heart disease.

If you are sick, go to a family doctor first. Your family doctor may refer (send) you to a specialist. If you think you need to see a specialist, you must talk to your family doctor first.

Finding a family doctor

How can you find a family doctor?

- Ask your friends, neighbours, or other people in your community.
- Talk to people at an immigrant settlement agency. You may be able to find a doctor who speaks your language.
- Some hospitals have a list of doctors who are taking new patients.
- Look in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Physicians and Surgeons."

Making an appointment

Before you go to the doctor, you should telephone the doctor's office for an appointment. Always take your CareCard with you when you visit a doctor.

Prescription drugs

You must have a doctor's prescription (written permission) to buy prescription drugs (medicine) at a pharmacy (drugstore). The pharmacist will explain how often and how long you must take the medicine.

You can buy some drugs without a prescription. These are called non-prescription drugs or "over-the-counter" drugs. These are usually

for less serious problems, such as colds or allergies. If you have a question about over-the-counter drugs, ask your pharmacist.

Pharmacare program

Pharmacare is a B.C. government program. If you are a permanent resident of British Columbia and have MSP coverage, Pharmacare may pay for some of the cost of prescription drugs you have bought in B.C. You can find out more about Pharmacare from your pharmacist, or you can call Pharmacare. In Vancouver, call 604 682-6849. In Victoria, call 250 952-2866. Elsewhere in B.C., call 1-800-554-0250.

Dentists

Check with friends, immigrant settlement agencies, or the Yellow Pages to find a dentist. Call the dentist's office to make an appointment.

MSP will not pay for regular dental services. If you have a job, your employer may have a dental plan that you can join. Under the Healthy Kids Program, children under age 19 whose family is in receipt of premium assistance through MSP will be eligible for limited dental coverage if the family is not covered by an employer. Ask your dentist for more information.

Some public health units have dental clinics. They give free dental checkups and cleanings to young children and low-cost dental care to older children and adults.

To find out what dental services are available in your community, look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book under public or community health. For Vancouver, look up "dental clinics" in the Cities and Municipalities section.

Public health units

Many communities have public health units. These are medical offices where community health nurses and doctors give free health care information to families.

If you have a serious health problem, a public health nurse may be able to help you in your home. These nurses can also help women prepare for a new baby and visit them at home after the baby is born. They will also give immunizations to babies and

children against diseases, such as polio and measles.

To find a health unit in your area, look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book. Look for the "Health Authorities" section. It is after the Government of British Columbia listings and before the Municipal Government listings. You can also call the Health Information Line. In Vancouver, call 604 683-7151. In Victoria, call 250 952-1742. Elsewhere in B.C., call 1-800-465-4911.

Emotional problems

Sometimes immigrants have emotional problems. They may feel homesick, afraid, forgetful, or hopeless. If you feel upset, talk to your doctor, or a counsellor at an immigrant settlement agency.

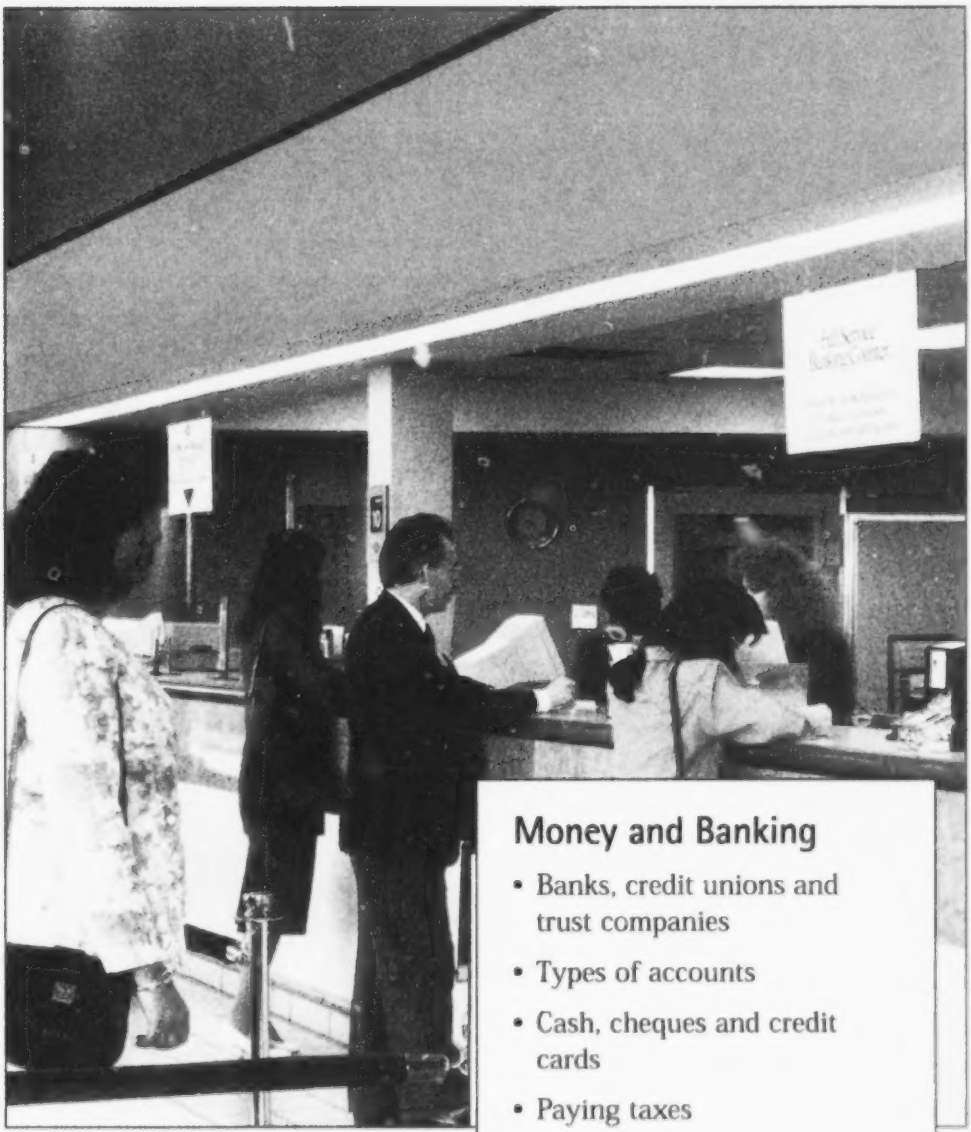
What if someone needs more help than this? There are Mental Health Centres in most B.C. communities. People at these centres can help. To find the mental health centre nearest you, look in the White Pages of the telephone book under "Mental Health Centres."

Eye exams and eyeglasses

If you need an eye examination, talk to your family doctor or look in the Yellow Pages under "Optometrists."

Under the Healthy Kids Program, children under age 19 whose family is in receipt of premium assistance through MSP will have basic eyeglasses paid for if the family is not covered by an employer. Ask your optician/optometrist for further information.

Money and Banking



Money and Banking

- Banks, credit unions and trust companies
- Types of accounts
- Cash, cheques and credit cards
- Paying taxes
- Investing money

Banks, credit unions, and trust companies

You can open an account at a bank, a credit union, or a trust company.

Before you choose a place to bank, find out what kind of accounts it has. Ask questions about interest and charges.

- Most banks pay you interest on the money in your account.
- A bank may charge you for the services it gives.

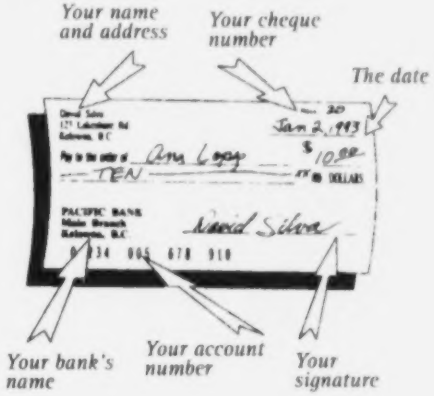
Types of accounts

- **Chequing accounts** – Some chequing accounts charge you for each cheque you write. Some have monthly charges. Some chequing accounts don't pay interest.
- **Savings accounts** – All savings accounts pay interest, but the amount of interest is not always the same. You cannot write cheques on some savings accounts.
- **Chequing-savings accounts** – These accounts pay interest. You can also write cheques. The interest and charges are not the same at all banks.

Paying by cash, cheque, credit card or debit card

Cash is money—coins and bills.

Cheques are often used instead of cash. When you write a cheque, you are telling your bank to pay the money. To pay by cheque, you must show the cashier some identification (ID). Most cashiers ask to see a driver's licence and a credit card or a passport. If you don't have a driver's licence, ask for an ID card at a Driver Services Centre. See the chapter on "Cars and Driving."



Credit cards let you buy things now and pay for them later. You can get credit cards from department stores or gas companies. You can also get bank credit cards such as Visa and Mastercard. If you don't pay the full

amount of the credit card bill each month, then you have to pay interest. It may be very expensive.

Debit cards can be used instead of a cheque or credit card to buy things in some stores. You get these cards from your bank or credit union. When you buy things with these cards, the money comes out of your account immediately. You pay a fee each time you use a debit card.

Bank machines

Banks, credit unions, and some trust companies have bank machines. There are also bank machines in stores and other convenient places. You can take money out of your accounts or put money into them. You can also pay bills and transfer money to other accounts. You can use bank machines any time—day or night.

Some banks and credit unions charge a service fee each time you use one of these machines.

To use the machines, you need a card from your bank or credit union. You will get a secret number (Personal Identification Number, or PIN) so that only you can use your card. Be careful. Do not give this number to anyone else.

Banking by phone and Internet

You may be able to do some of your banking from home with a touch-tone phone. For example, you can transfer money between accounts and pay your bills. Ask your bank about this service.

You may also be able to do your banking from home over the Internet. You need a computer, a telephone or cable line to connect you to the Internet, and software (computer programs) to access the Internet. Ask your bank about this service.

Sending money to other countries

Canadian banks and foreign exchange companies can send money to banks in most countries. You can also mail a money order (draft). You can get this at a bank, a foreign exchange company, or more cheaply at the post office. Check first that this cheque can be cashed in the other country.

Mortgages and loans

A mortgage is money you borrow to buy a house.

A loan is money you borrow for other reasons. For example, some people get a loan to buy a car.

You must pay back part of the money each month and also pay interest. To get a loan, you must be earning enough money to easily repay the borrowed money.

Owing money

Some people borrow money or buy things and plan to pay later. Then they find it is not possible to make the payments. What if they can't pay? They should phone or write the people they owe money to. Sometimes it is possible to make smaller payments. What if this doesn't help? There is a provincial government office that will give you free advice and counselling on what to do. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book in the Government of British Columbia section. Look under "Debt Counselling" or "Debtor Assistance."

Paying taxes

Governments get most of their money from taxes. Taxes pay for services such as roads, parks, community centres, medical care, welfare, schools, and universities.

PST and GST – Whenever you buy something in British Columbia, you must pay 7.5 per cent Provincial Sales Tax (PST) and 7 per cent Federal Goods and Services Tax (GST). Everything except rent, food, and a few other things are taxed. There is no PST on clothes for children under 15 years old.

If you have a low income, you can get a GST credit. This means the government will send back money to you four times a year. To apply for this money, fill in the special page of the income tax form.

Income tax – Working people have income tax taken off their pay cheques each month. But everyone still has to fill in a tax form each year and send it to the government by April 30. The government may send you back some money because too much tax was taken off your pay cheque. Maybe you will have to pay more because not enough money was taken off.

If you had no income, you should still fill in the form. You may get some money from the government.

Self-employed people and people who own businesses have to pay income tax. Non-working people must also pay taxes on income from investments. For income tax information, phone Revenue Canada. To find the office near you, look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book. Find the Government of Canada section. Look under "Canada Customs and Revenue Agency – Tax Services," or call 1-800-959-8281.

During March and April, many community organizations give free help with filling in income tax forms. You can also pay someone to help you. Look in the Yellow Pages of the phone book under "Tax."

Property Taxes – Everyone who owns a house, land, or buildings must pay property tax. Your city or town sends you a bill once or twice a year. You can also pay your property tax as part of your mortgage.

Investing money

Term deposits and GICs – Term deposits or Guaranteed Investment Certificates (GICs) pay more interest than savings accounts. Up to $60,000 of your money is insured in a bank or trust company, and up to $100,000 in a credit union. When you put money in term deposits and GICs, you must leave it there for a

set time (between one month and five years). You may not be able to take it out early. Talk to someone at your bank, credit union, or trust company about these investments.

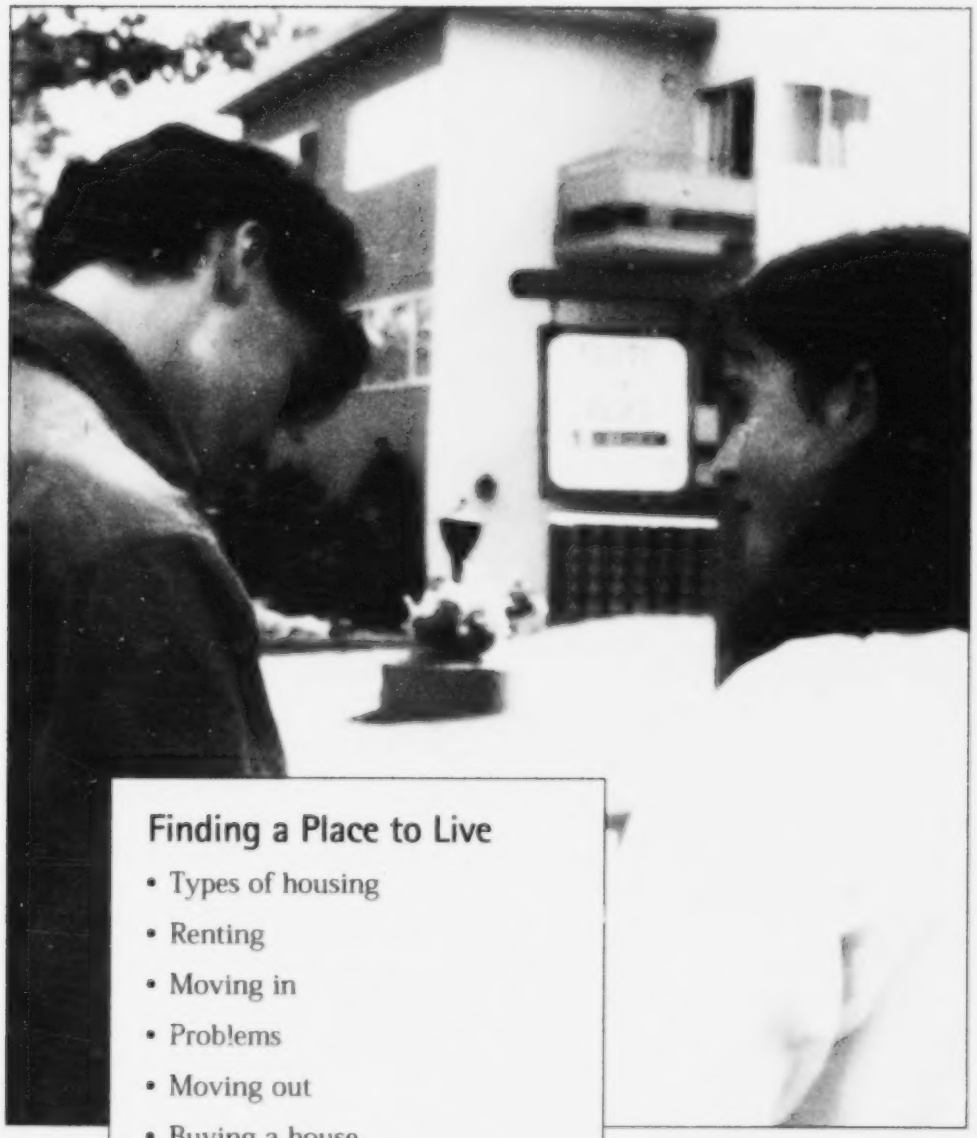
Canada Savings Bonds and Treasury Bills – When you buy Canada Savings Bonds and Treasury Bills, you are lending money to the government. The government pays you interest on the bonds. For information, check with your bank, credit union, or trust company.

RRSPs – A Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) lets you invest money for your retirement. Putting money in a RRSP can lower the taxes you pay every year. If you are working or earning money from a business, you can put money in a RRSP. If you take out some or all of the money before you retire, you will have to pay tax on it. The tax is lower if your income is low.

Larger investments – You may want to buy shares in a corporation, join with others in a mutual investment fund, or invest in other ways. Ask your bank, credit union, or trust company for advice. You can also talk to an investment counsellor or financial planner. Look in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Financial Planning."

If you are an entrepreneur who must invest in a business as condition of your immigration visa, contact the Business Immigration Office in Vancouver. The telephone number is 604 844-1810, and they are located at Suite 730, 999 Canada Place, Vancouver B.C. V6C 3E1. Website: www.gov.bc.ca/cse

Finding a Place to Live



Finding a Place to Live

- Types of housing
- Renting
- Moving in
- Problems
- Moving out
- Buying a house

Types of housing

An apartment or suite usually has one or more bedrooms. All apartments and suites have a kitchen, a bathroom, and a living room. Suites for rent may be in an apartment building or in a house. Studios or bachelor suites have one room with a kitchen area and a bathroom.

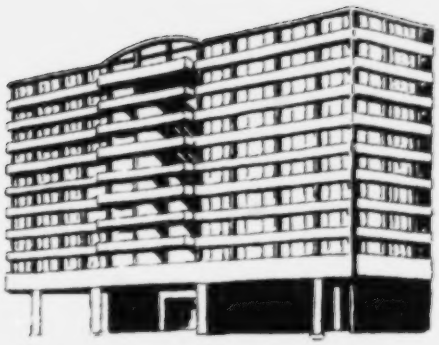
A duplex is a house divided into two separate apartments. It may be bought or rented.

A townhouse is a small house joined to other small houses. It may be bought or rented.

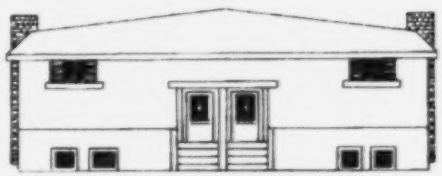
An apartment building has one owner for the whole building. In a condominium ("condo" or "strata") building, each apartment is owned by one person or family.

A mobile home can be moved from one place to another. It is usually cheaper to buy than a house. You must also buy or rent the land to put a mobile home on.

A room for rent is usually in a shared house or apartment. Everyone shares the kitchen and bathroom.

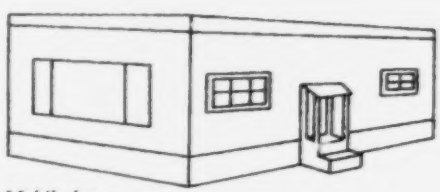


Apartment building



Duplex

Townhouse



Mobile home

Room and board means a room and meals. Furniture is included.

Housing cooperatives ("co-ops") and some non-profit groups also provide low-cost housing. There is a waiting list for these places. For information on co-ops on the mainland, call the Co-operative Housing Federation of B.C., Suite 200 – 5550 Fraser Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5W 2Z4, telephone 604 879-5112 or call 1-800-879-5111. Website: www.chf.bc.ca. For information on co-ops on Vancouver Island, call the Vancouver Island Co-op Housing office at 250 384-9444.

B.C. Housing, a government agency, can help low-income people apply for low-cost rental housing. B.C. Housing manages some of this housing. Non-profit and co-op groups manage most low-cost housing.

To apply for this low-cost housing, you must live in B.C. You should apply to B.C. Housing and other housing groups. There is a waiting list for these homes. This housing is offered first to people in the greatest need.

To find out if you qualify for low-cost housing and to apply, call B.C. Housing at 604 433-2218 in Vancouver. Elsewhere in British Columbia, call 1-800-257-7756. Website: www.bchousing.org. B.C. Housing has information available in English, Chinese, Korean, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Where to look for housing

- Look in the Classified Ads in the newspaper.
- Look for "Vacancy" or "For Rent" signs on houses and apartment buildings.
- Look for ads on notice boards. Many places such as community centres, grocery stores, and laundromats have notice boards.
- If you live in a community with a Housing Registry, they are a good place to get information. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book in the "Municipalities" section under "Housing."

Discrimination

A landlord cannot refuse to rent a place to people because of their race, skin colour, age, birthplace,

ancestry, religion, sex, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, disability or source of income. A landlord usually cannot refuse to rent to people because they have children. B.C. law says this is discrimination. A landlord can refuse to rent to pet owners and people who smoke.

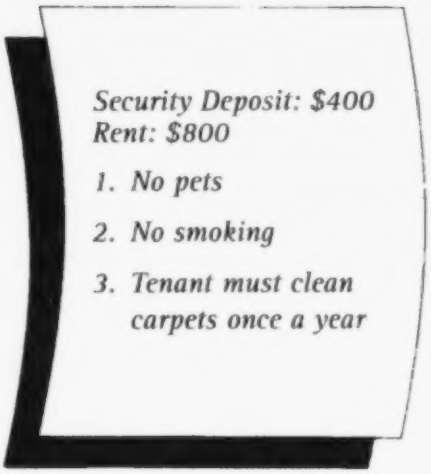
If you have a problem with discrimination, call the B.C. Human Rights Coalition, the Tenants' Rights Action Coalition, or the B.C. Human Rights Commission/Tribunal (see page 31, and the listings at the end of this chapter).

Finding a place to live

When you find a place you like, ask these questions:

How much is the rent?
You usually pay rent on the first day of each month. The landlord can raise your rent only once a year, and only by a certain amount. The landlord must give you notice in writing three months before the rent is increased.

Are utilities included in the rent, or do I have to pay for them?
Utilities are electricity, gas, or oil (for cooking and heating). Sometimes you have to pay for utilities. Sometimes the landlord includes them in the rent. Ask the landlord about this.



How much is the security deposit?
You usually have to pay some extra money—not more than half of one month's rent—when you move in. The landlord keeps this money until you move out. Some of this money may be used to pay for any damage you do. If you do no damage, and clean the apartment well when you move out, the landlord must give you back all the money, plus interest. They must do this within 15 days. If there are any deductions you must agree to them in writing.

Tenancy agreement

When you agree to rent a house or apartment, you and the landlord are making a contract. It is called a tenancy agreement. It should be a written agreement. Your tenancy agreement gives you the rules for renting your home.

The law says that landlords and tenants have certain rights and certain things they each must do. A tenancy agreement cannot change the law.

For information on a landlord's or tenant's rights and responsibilities, contact the Residential Tenancy Office, listed in the Blue Pages of the telephone book in the Government of B.C. section. The office can also help solve disagreements between landlords and tenants. In Vancouver, call 604 660-3456. In Victoria, call 250 387-1602. In Kelowna, call 250 717-2000. Elsewhere in B.C., call 1-800-665-8779.

Moving in

What if you have to pay for utilities such as telephone and hydro (electricity) and gas? Then you have to get these connected. The cost of this is usually included in the first month's bill. To get these services, phone B.C. Hydro, B.C. Gas, or the company that provides oil or gas in your community. Look in the White Pages to find B.C. Hydro and B.C. Gas. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Oils – Fuel and Heating."

To get your telephone connected, call the B.C. telephone company (called "Telus"). Look in the first pages of your phone book.

In most cities and towns, mail is delivered to your house or apartment building. If you live in an area without home delivery, call Canada Post at 1-800-267-1177 to get a community mail box.

Garbage

Garbage is picked up once a week in most cities and towns. There may be a rule about how much garbage you can put out. In many areas, people put things such as bottles, cans, and newspapers in special boxes. These are picked up for recycling. For information on garbage and recycling, call your city or town hall.

Repairs

What if the roof leaks or the toilet doesn't work or there is no hot water? The law says the landlord must make these repairs quickly. The landlord must post the name and phone number of an emergency contact who can make repairs.

When a tenant or a tenant's guests damage a rented house or apartment, the tenant must pay for the repairs.

Letting the landlord in

Unless it is an emergency, it is against the law for a landlord to enter your rented home without getting your permission. If the landlord has a good reason and tells the tenant 24 hours before, the landlord can enter.

Emergencies are different. If there is an emergency such as a fire or a broken water pipe, the landlord can come in without your permission.

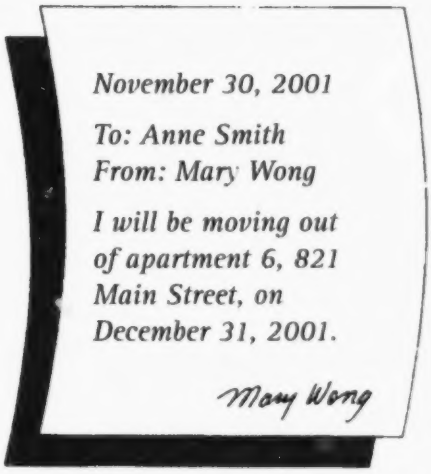
Eviction

The landlord can tell a tenant to move out. This is called "eviction." The landlord must tell you in writing and give reasons. This is called "giving notice." If you do not agree with the reasons the landlord gives you, you can call the Residential Tenancy Branch, the Tenants' Rights Coalition, your local tenants group, or the Legal Services Society (see the chapter on "The Legal System").

B.C. cities and towns also have their own laws about health and building standards. Phone your city or town hall to talk about repair problems, such as no heat or no hot water.

When you move out

Give notice – When you plan to move out of a rented house or apartment, you must tell your landlord or manager in writing. This is called "giving notice." Give the notice to the landlord one month before you will move out. Do this by the last day of the month before



November 30, 2001

To: Anne Smith
From: Mary Wong

I will be moving out of apartment 6, 821 Main Street, on December 31, 2001.

Mary Wong

you will move out. The first day of the month is too late!

Cleaning – You must clean your rented home before you move out. You must also clean the stove, fridge, bathrooms and light fixtures. Check your tenancy agreement to see if you must clean the carpets or drapes.

Cancel telephone and utilities – Call the telephone company to have the phone disconnected. If you do not do this, you may have to pay phone bills after you move out. If you pay for the electricity, gas, or oil, phone the companies and tell them to disconnect your service.

Change your address – Go to the post office and fill in a "change-of-address" card. The post office will send your mail from the old address to the new address. There is a fee for this service.

Give your new address to your bank, employer, school, medical plan, Motor Vehicle Branch, and cable TV company. Phone or mail them a change-of-address card. You can buy these cards at the post office.

Arrange for a moving company or rent a truck – A moving company will send a truck and people to move your things. Look in the Classified Ads in the newspaper or in the Yellow Pages under "Movers." You can also rent a truck or van and move the things yourself. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Truck Renting and Leasing."

Buying a house

To buy a house, call a real estate company. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Real Estate." Many community newspapers also have ads for houses for sale.

Many people pay a lawyer to help them with the papers to buy a house.

Most people borrow money from a bank, credit union, or trust company to buy a house. This is called a mortgage. Mortgage rates are not the same at all banks. Check around for the best mortgage you can get.

You have to pay tax when you buy a new house.

Insurance

You can buy insurance on your home and your belongings. The insurance company will pay for most of the costs of what you lose in a fire or robbery. Both home owners and tenants can buy insurance. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Insurance Agents and Brokers."

Where to go for help

TENANTS' RIGHTS ACTION COALITION

Lower Mainland Tenants' Rights Information Line
Vancouver area: Tel: 604 255-0546
Outside of the Lower Mainland
Tel: 1-800-665-1185
Website: www.tenants.bc.ca

RESIDENTIAL TENANCY BRANCH

Victoria, Tel: 250 387-1602

B.C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

1300 - 1202 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1L8
Tel: 604 689-8474
Fax: 604 689-7511
Toll Free: 1-877-689-8474
Website: www.human-rights-coalition.bc.ca

B.C. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND B.C. HUMAN RIGHT TRIBUNAL

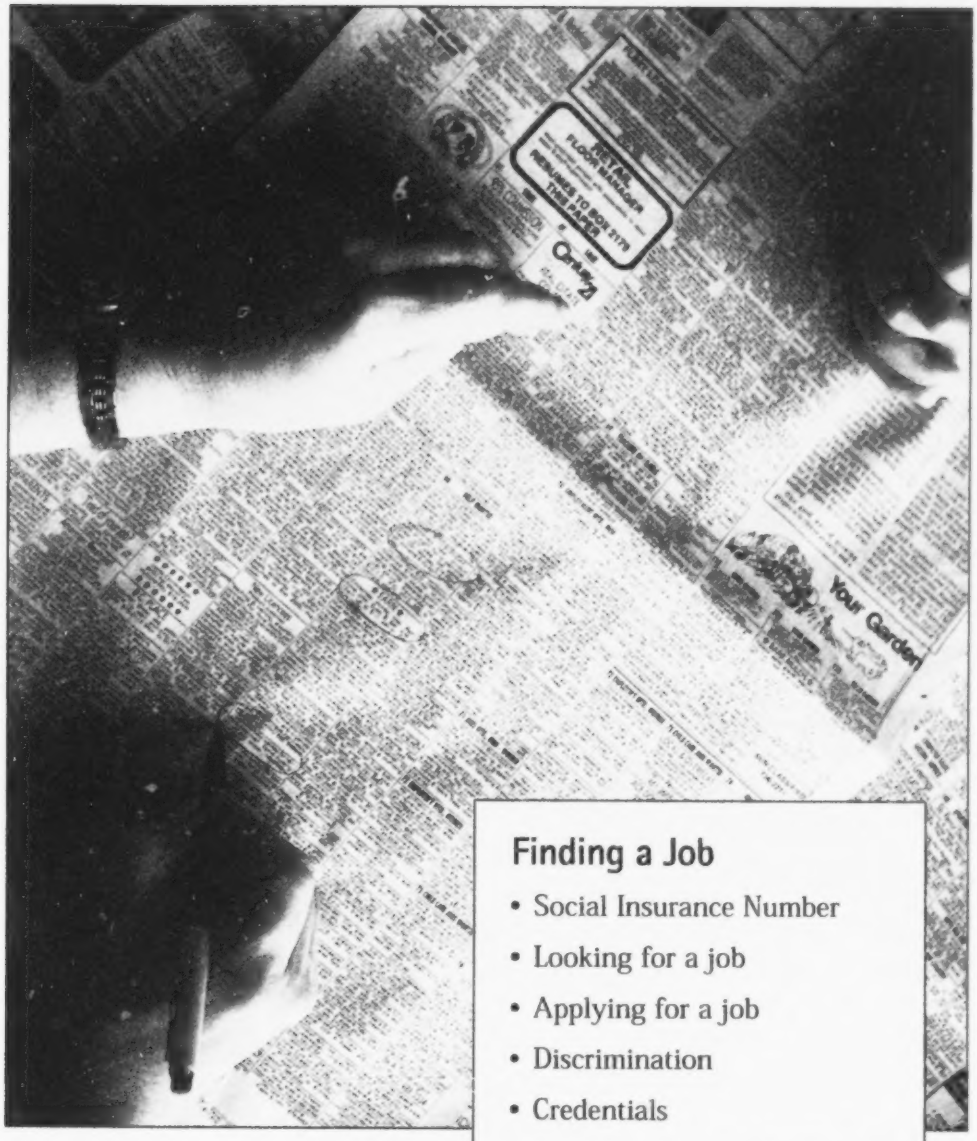
Vancouver
201 - 815 Hornby Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2E6
Tel: 604 660-6811
Fax: 604 660-0195

Victoria
2nd Floor, 844 Courtenay Street
P.O. Box 9209 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9J1
Tel: 250 387-3710
Fax: 250 387-3643

Everywhere else in B.C.
1-800-663-0876

Commission Website: www.bchrc.gov.bc.ca
Tribunal Website: www.bchrt.gov.bc.ca

Finding a Job



Finding a Job

- Social Insurance Number
- Looking for a job
- Applying for a job
- Discrimination
- Credentials
- Starting your own business

Social Insurance Number

To work in Canada, you need a Social Insurance Number (SIN). Most immigrants apply for this number shortly after they arrive in Canada. If you have not done this, go to a Human Resources Development Centre to apply for a card. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book in the Government of Canada section under "Human Resources Development Canada." Call the "Social Insurance Number Inquiry line" to find out what documents you need to take with you.

Where to look for a job

- Go to a Human Resources Development Centre and look at the computerized job listings. Talk to the people who work there.
- Look in the Classified Ads in newspapers.
- Tell many people that you are looking for a job. Friends, relatives, teachers, neighbours, counsellors, and settlement workers may know about a job.
- Check notice boards in your community for job ads.
- Look for "Help Wanted" signs outside businesses and stores.
- Apply at the Personnel Department of hospitals, hotels, and large companies.
- Phone or visit companies that might hire you. Some companies have jobs, but they don't advertise them. Use the Yellow Pages of the phone book to find where to go. For example, if you are a car mechanic, look under "Automobile Repairing and Service."
- Look in the Yellow Pages for private employment agencies. An employment agency cannot charge you for finding you a job, or for giving you information about employers who are seeking employees.

How to apply for a job

Application forms – Many companies have application forms. Bring all the information you need to fill in the form or take the application form home to complete.

Resumes – Many companies ask for a resume. A resume is a written summary of your work experience and education. Friends, or people at an immigrant settlement agency, may be able to help you. There are also businesses that write resumes for you. They charge a fee. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Resume Service."

Job interviews – At a job interview, the employer will ask questions about your education, skills, and work experience. Often employers ask questions such as:

- Why do you want to work here?
- Why are you the best person for the job?
- Tell me about yourself.

Employers want you to explain your skills. They expect you to show interest in their business. Practise answering questions before the interview.

At the interview, you can also ask the employer questions about the job. For example, ask about the duties, the salary, and the hours of work. Also ask about the benefits, such as medical insurance and vacation time.

Discrimination

There are laws to protect workers from discrimination. For example, an employer must hire employees on the basis of qualifications. The employer can't refuse to hire you because they don't like your skin colour or your religion. This is discrimination. Other kinds of discrimination are also against the law. It is discrimination if someone doesn't give you a job because of your sex, age, marital status, disability, or sexual orientation.

If you have a problem with discrimination, talk to the B.C. Human Rights Coalition, the B.C. Human Rights Commission or Tribunal, (see listings at the end of the previous chapter), or the Canadian Human Rights Commission (call: 604 666-2251 or 1-800-999-6899).

Employment programs

There are courses to teach you how to look for a job. There are also job training courses. In many of these programs, you are paid while you learn new skills. Go to a Human Resources Development Centre or an immigrant settlement agency to get more information about programs in your area.

Credentials

Many credentials from other countries are acceptable in Canada. Some credentials are not acceptable.

Immigrants to Canada often have certificates from another country. To get a job or more education, your certificates may have to be translated and evaluated.

The Open Learning Agency (OLA) operates the International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES). ICES will assess foreign secondary and post-secondary certificates for employment. This service costs between $115 and $200. To contact ICES, call 604 431-3402 in the Lower Mainland. Outside of Vancouver, call 1-800-663-1663. Website: http://www.ola.bc.ca/ices

Trades people, such as electricians or plumbers, may be qualified in other countries. If they want a certificate to work here, they should contact the nearest Apprenticeship office for information. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book in the Government of British Columbia section, under "Industry Training Authority."

Most professions such as teachers, doctors, and architects have their own standards. Ask an immigrant settlement agency where to get information about your profession.

Starting your own business

There are many rules for starting a business. The business must be registered and licensed by the government. There are government

programs that may help you start a business.

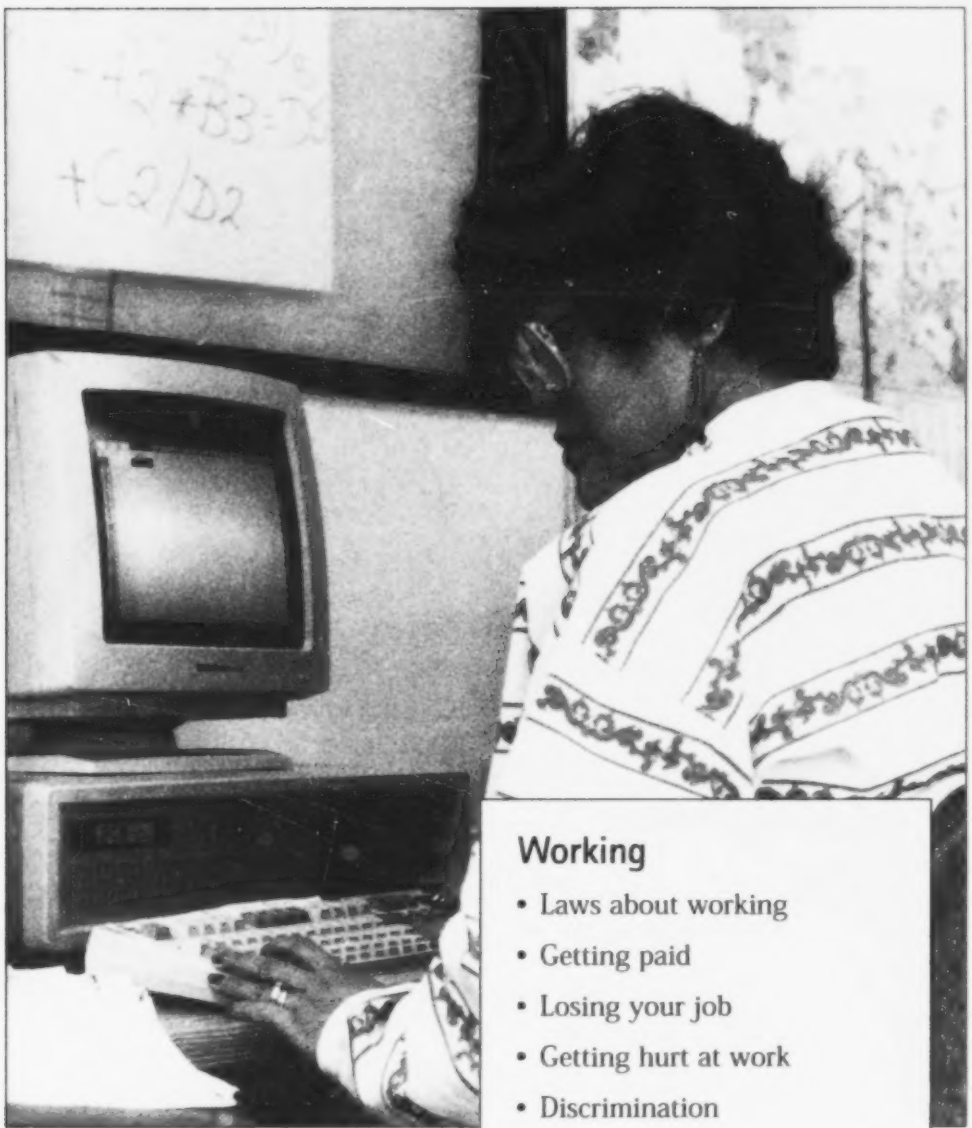
The Canada–B.C. Business Service Centre can give you information and advice about regulations, government help, and training. It is located at 601 West Cordova Street in Vancouver. If you live in Greater Vancouver, call 604 775-5525. If you live elsewhere, call 1-800-667-2272. Website: www.smallbusinessbc.ca

Community colleges also offer seminars and courses to help you start your own business. See the listings of colleges in the chapter on "Education."

Business immigrants

People who entered Canada as business immigrants may need information and advice. They should contact the provincial Business Immigration Office for help. There are business counsellors who speak different languages. If you agreed to open a business as a condition of immigrating (entrepreneur class), you may wish to attend the special seminars at the Business Immigration Office. These seminars are given in different languages. The Business Immigration Office is located in the World Trade Centre in Vancouver. Call 604 844-1810.

Working



Working

- Laws about working
- Getting paid
- Losing your job
- Getting hurt at work
- Discrimination

Laws about working

In British Columbia, there is a law to protect most workers. This law is called the *Employment Standards Act*. Both workers and employers have responsibilities under this Act.

If your employer is not obeying these laws, talk to them. If you belong to a union, talk to someone in your union as well. If you still have a problem, phone the Employment Standards Branch. If you are an employer, it is important for you to obey the laws of the *Employment Standards Act*.

For information about the *Employment Standards Act*, look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book. Find the Government of British Columbia section. Look under "Employment Standards Act." In Vancouver, the general inquiries number is 604 775-1974. Elsewhere the number is 1-800-663-3316. Website: www.labour.gov.bc.ca

Hours of work and overtime

Workers in British Columbia usually work eight hours a day and 40 hours a week. If your employer asks you to work more than this, he must pay you more money. This is called

"overtime" pay. It is at least 1.5 times your hourly pay.

What if you get to work and there isn't any work to do? The employer must pay you for two hours of work. What if you work only a short time? Then the employer must pay you for two hours of work. Students under 18 years old must be paid for at least two hours if they work on a school day.

Time off

After working for five hours, your employer has to give you a 30-minute break. The employer does not have to pay you for this time. If you work a split shift, the time between when you start work in the day and the time you stop work cannot be more than 12 hours.

You must have 32 consecutive hours free from work each week. If your employer asks you to work during the 32 hours, they must pay you two times your hourly pay. This is called "double time."

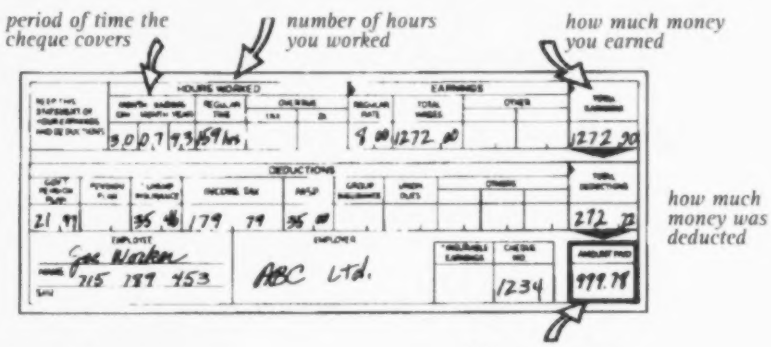
Getting paid

Most workers get paid by cheque every two weeks. Your employer must give you a pay slip with every cheque.

Deductions

The law says that the employer must deduct money from your pay cheque to pay for the following:

- **Canada Pension Plan (CPP)** – You pay money into this plan each month that you work. When you retire, you may receive a pension from the government.
- **Employment Insurance (EI)** – You pay money into this plan each month that you work. If you lose your job, you may receive money from the government while you look for a new job.
- **Income tax** – This money helps to pay the costs of government expenses, such as health care and education.
- **Taxable benefits** – Your employer may provide some benefits (for example, group life insurance plan, medical premiums, dental plan or pension plan) which are considered taxable benefits by Revenue Canada. The value of these benefits is deducted from your pay cheque.
- **Union dues** – If you are in a union, and the union has an



Sample Pay Slip

agreement with your employer, some money will be deducted to pay for the union dues.

- **Voluntary deductions** – Your employer may deduct additional amounts for things that you have given your permission to deduct. For example, you may have chosen additional hospital or life insurance coverage, may make charitable donations, or purchase Canada Savings Bonds through deductions from your pay cheque.

Minimum wage

As of November 1st, 2001, the minimum wage in British Columbia is $8.00 per hour. Both full-time and part-time workers get at least the minimum wage. If you have never had a job before, your employer can pay you $6.00 per hour for your first 500 hours of work. Once you reach 500 hours, you must be paid at least the minimum wage of $8.00 per hour.

Children and work

Children under 15 years old may not work during school hours. To hire them when they are not in school, their employer must get a permit of employment from the Employment Standards Branch. But children are allowed to do small jobs after school, such as babysitting or delivering newspapers, without a permit.

Joining a union

A union is a group of employees who join together to talk about wages and working conditions with the employer. Everyone has the right to belong to a union at work. In some jobs, all employees must join the union.

If you have a problem with your employer, tell someone in the union. That person will speak to the employer about your problem. For more information about unions, contact the B.C. Federation of Labour. They are located at 5118 Joyce Street, 2nd floor, Vancouver, B.C, V5R 4H1. Call 604 430-1421. Website: www.bcfed.com

Vacations

All workers must get at least two weeks of paid vacation every year. If you leave your job before you take your vacation, your employer must give you some extra money, called vacation pay. It is at least four per cent of your earnings.

Holidays

In British Columbia, employers must give workers the following statutory holidays:

- New Year's Day (January 1st)
- Good Friday (the Friday before Easter Sunday)
- Victoria Day (Monday before May 24th)
- Canada Day (July 1st)
- B.C. Day (first Monday in August)
- Labour Day (first Monday in September)
- Thanksgiving (second Monday in October)
- Remembrance Day (November 11th)
- Christmas Day (December 25th)
- Boxing Day (December 26th)

If you work on any of these days, your employer must pay you overtime pay or give you other days off. Contact the Employment Standards Branch for more information.

Maternity leave

A working pregnant woman may take 17 weeks maternity leave from work without pay, which can start up to 11 weeks before the delivery of the baby. She may also take up to 35 weeks of parental leave after the baby is born. This maternity and parental leave can total 52 weeks off work. She may apply for money from Employment Insurance (EI) during her maternity leave. The father or adoptive parents may also take up to 37 weeks of parental leave.

Losing your job

If you are laid off, and you have worked for at least three months, your employer must pay you one week's pay, or give you one week's notice of the layoff. If you have worked for a year, your employer must pay you two week's pay, or give you two weeks notice of the layoff. If you have worked three years or more, you must receive more weeks of pay or notice.

If your employer dismisses you for just cause, (i.e. serious misconduct, or other serious breach of your duties), the employer does not have to give you notice or pay you extra.

If you feel that your employer has dismissed you unfairly, you can file a complaint with the Employment Standards Branch.

When you leave a full-time job, your employer must give you a Record of Employment. You need this paper to apply for Employment Insurance. You may not be able to get Employment Insurance (EI) if you are fired or if you quit your job.

Employment Insurance

Employment Insurance (EI) is money the government gives to someone who loses a job. When you work, a small amount of money is deducted from your pay cheque each month. Then, if you are laid off, you may get money to live on while you are looking for a new job.

You must have worked a certain number of weeks to get EI. You may not get EI if you are fired, or if you quit your job. You can find out more about EI at the Human Resources Development Centre nearest you.

Getting hurt at work

The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) helps workers who are injured at work. Workers who cannot work because they got hurt or sick at

work may get money from WCB. Employers pay for WCB coverage. If you have an accident at work, talk to your supervisor right away.

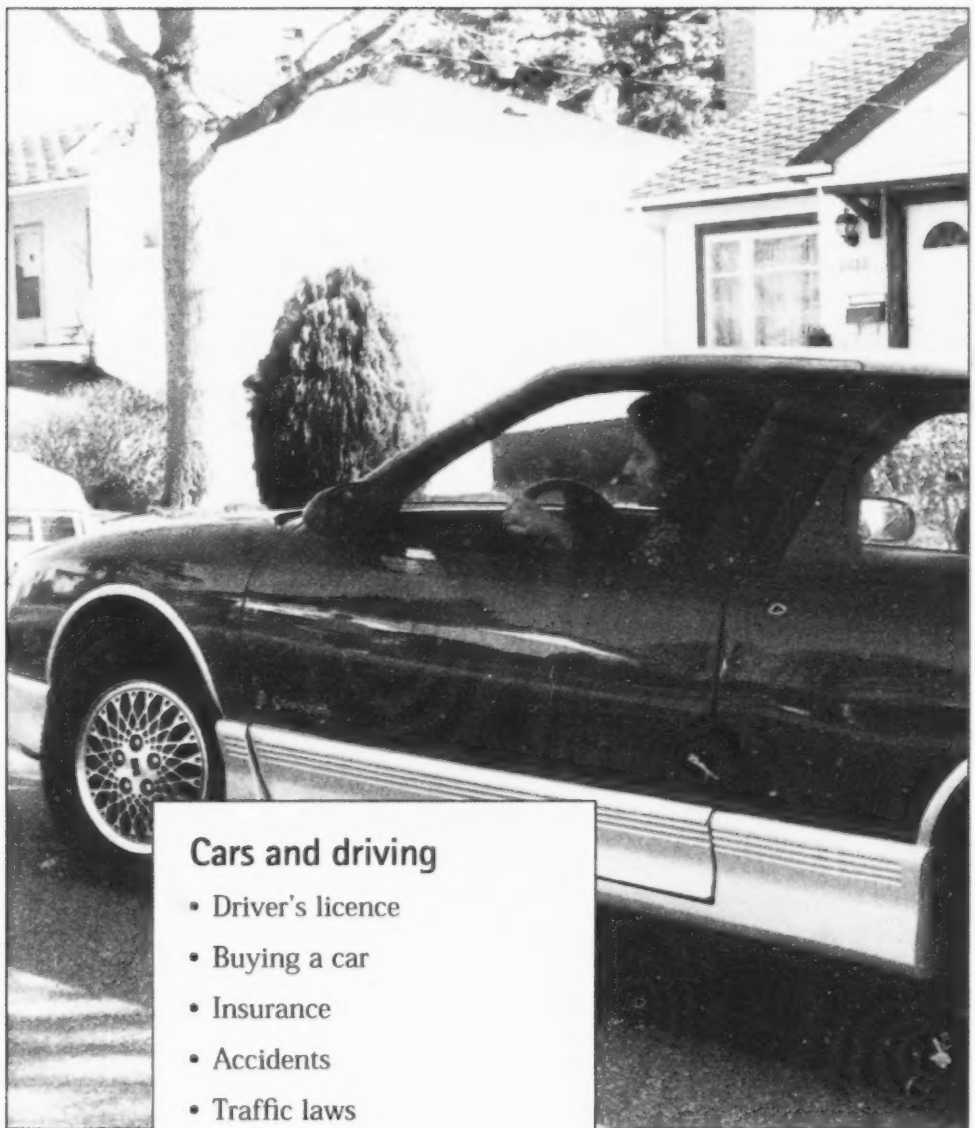
Workers and employers can call the WCB for advice and information. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book in the Government of British Columbia section under "Workers' Compensation." The numbers for workers to call are 604 273-2266 (in the Lower Mainland) and 1-800-661-2112 (elsewhere in B.C.). Employers can call 604 713-0303 (in the Lower Mainland) and 1-800-925-2233 (elsewhere in B.C.). Website: www.labour.gov.bc.ca/eao

Discrimination

There are laws to protect workers from discrimination. For example, employers must hire employees on the basis of qualifications. They cannot refuse to hire you because of your religion, skin colour, sex, age, marital status, disability, or sexual orientation.

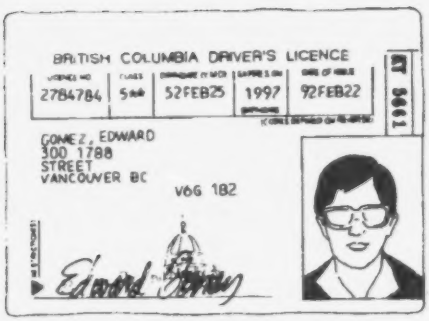
Sometimes other workers discriminate against you or call you racist or offensive names. This is called harassment and it is against the law. Sometimes other workers may treat you badly because you are a woman. This is called sexual harassment. It is also against the law. If you have a discrimination problem, talk to your union, the B.C. Human Rights Coalition, the B.C. Human Rights Commission/Tribunal, or the Canadian Human Rights Commission (see the listing at the end of the chapter on "Finding a Place to Live").

Cars and Driving



Cars and driving

- Driver's licence
- Buying a car
- Insurance
- Accidents
- Traffic laws



Driver's licence

New B.C. residents who hold a Canadian, American, Austrian, German, Swiss, Japanese or South Korean driver licence can apply for a B.C. driver's licence within 90 days of moving to British Columbia. A new equivalent class B.C. driver's licence will be issued in most cases without a road test. New residents who hold any other types of driver's licence will be required to take a road test. For more information, visit an Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) Driver Service Centre. Website: www.icbc.com

Other people use an International Driving Permit. This permit is valid up to a year upon issuance of the permit, but in B.C. you may only use it for up to 6 months as a visitor. You must also have a valid driver's licence from your country.

In B.C. you need different types of licences to drive a motorcycle, bus, large truck, or taxi.

Applying for a driver's licence

To apply for a B.C. driver's licence, you must be 16 years old or older. Go to a Driver Services Centre. To find the phone numbers and locations of these offices, look in the White Pages of the telephone book under "ICBC–Driver Services." Take two pieces of identification (ID), such as your passport and birth certificate, with you.

If you are under 19 years old, a parent or guardian must sign the application.

Knowledge Test – To get a driver's licence you must know about the driving rules in British Columbia. Ask for the Safe Driving Guide at any Driver Services Centre. This booklet has information about learning to drive, B.C.'s traffic laws, the rules of the road, and safe driving.

After you have studied the booklet, you take a knowledge test. You will also have a vision test. If you use glasses, wear them to take the vision test.

If you need an interpreter, check with the Driver Services Centre. Knowledge tests are available in English, French, Chinese and Punjabi. If you can't read or write, you can take an oral test.

If you pass the knowledge test, you get a learner driver's licence. It is good for one year. You can practice driving with this licence, but you must always have someone 19 years old or older who has a driver's licence sitting next to you.

Road Test – If you have a licence from your country or an International Driving Permit, you can take the road test right after you pass the knowledge test. If you have never had a driver's licence, you must wait at least six months under the Graduated Licensing Program before you take the road test. This period can be reduced by three months if you successfully complete a driver education course approved by ICBC.

During the road test, an examiner will test how safely you drive. If you pass the road test, you will get a B.C. driver's licence. If you fail the test, you can try again later.

There is a fee for the knowledge test, the road test, and the driver's licence.

Driving schools

Driving schools can help you learn to drive. You may be able to find a teacher who speaks your language. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Driving Instruction" to find a list of driving schools in your area.

Buying a new or used car from a dealer

Car dealers sell new and used cars. The names of dealers are in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Automobile Dealers – New Cars" or "Automobile Dealers – Used Cars."

It is a good idea to visit several dealers to compare prices before you buy a car. You should also bargain with the salesperson to get a lower price.

Warranties

What happens if something goes wrong with your car? New cars have a "warranty". This means the dealer will replace or repair certain parts for free. Each warranty may cover only some things. Find out what the warranty covers and how long it lasts.

Getting a loan

Are you borrowing money to buy a car? Ask a bank or credit union for a loan with a low interest rate. A car dealer may also have loans available. Check at several places.

Buying a used car from another person

You can also buy a car directly from an owner. Check the Classified Ads in the newspaper, or look at specialized papers like the *Auto Trader*. Always test drive a car before you buy it. Take along a friend or relative for advice.

Is the car in good condition? Does it need repairs? Is it easy to get parts for the car? Find out the answers before you buy a car. If possible, ask a mechanic to check the car before you buy it.

If you buy a used motor vehicle from outside of B.C., or a rebuilt or altered vehicle, you must pay to have the vehicle inspected for safety before you can licence or register the vehicle. The inspection must be done at a Designated Inspection Facility (look in the Yellow Pages under "Vehicle Inspection Service"). For more information call any B.C. Autoplan Broker (look in the Yellow Pages under "Insurance Agents and Brokers"), or a Government Agent Office.

Checking for liens

Sometimes the seller has the ownership papers for the vehicle, but still owes money on the car. The bank or person to whom the money is owed may have a "lien" on the vehicle, meaning that they must be paid the money owed if the car is sold. If you buy the car, you may be responsible for the debt. It is important to ask for a lien search to check this. Some Driver Services

Centres do lien searches, or check with a Government Agent. You will need the year, make and serial number of the car. There is a fee for this service.

Registration and insurance

You must register your car and buy licence plates and car insurance. You can do this at any Autoplan (insurance broker) office.

The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) is a company owned by the B.C. government. It provides vehicle insurance and handles accident claims. ICBC makes sure that every car owner in the province has insurance. The insurance you buy pays for costs if you cause an accident and hurt someone or damage property.

You can also buy other kinds of vehicle insurance, such as protection if you damage your own car. You do not have to buy these other kinds of insurance, but it is a good idea to get as much protection as possible.

If you were a safe driver in your country, you can ask your insurance company in that country to write a letter about your insurance claims record. Take the letter with you when you buy your insurance. You may get a safe driving discount.

Car accidents

What should you do if you have an accident?

1. Find out if anyone is hurt.
2. Write down the other driver's:
   - name, address and phone number
   - driver's licence number
   - car licence plate number
3. Get the name, address and phone number of anyone who saw the accident.

You can write all of this information on the Accident Report Form that is in your *How to Make a Claim* booklet. You received this booklet with your car insurance papers.

Reporting to the police

Report to the police if:

- Someone has been hurt or killed.
- It looks as if the damage to the cars will cost more than $1,000.
- The other driver broke the law. For example, the driver was drunk, or drove through a red light.
- Another driver hit your car and drove away ("hit and run").

If you need the police to come, call the emergency number in your area. If it is not an emergency, go to the police station within 24 hours.

Reporting to ICBC

You should phone ICBC as soon as possible. Call the Dial-a-Claim number for the place where you live. You can find this number in your "How to Make a Claim" booklet or in the White Pages of the telephone book under "ICBC."

Traffic tickets

You have to pay a fine if the police catch you breaking certain traffic laws, such as driving through a red light or speeding (driving faster than the speed limit). You do not pay the police officer who gave you the ticket. You can pay the fine by cheque. Send your cheque to the address on the ticket. If you disagree with the ticket, you can go to court. The judge will decide if you have to pay.

Drivers who break a traffic law also get points against their driving records. For example, three points are charged for speeding. Drivers with four or more points in one year must pay money to ICBC.

Parking tickets

You also have to pay a fine if you get a ticket for parking in a "no parking" area or if you don't put enough money in a parking meter. Be sure to check the signs on the parking lot or meter to find out how much you are supposed to pay, and between what hours you are supposed to put money in the meter. Some parking meters have "No Parking Between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m." signs on them, and if you park at these meters between those hours, your car will be towed away.

Speeding

In most cities the speed limit is 50 kilometres per hour (km/h). This is the speed limit if there are no signs otherwise. Outside cities, the speed limit is usually a little higher–watch for speed limit signs. Near parks and schools, the speed limit is 30 km/h. The fines for speeding are $100 and up.

Seat belts

Seat belts can protect you from injuries in a car crash. In British Columbia, all drivers and passengers must wear seat belts. The police can fine you if you or other people in your car are not wearing a seat belt.

What happens if you are in an accident and you are not wearing a seat belt? You may get less money if you make an insurance claim.

Children under nine kilos (20 pounds) must sit in a baby seat facing the rear of the car. Children between nine and 18 kilos (20 to 40 pounds) must sit in a child safety seat. Children over six years old must wear seat belts.

Drinking and driving

British Columbia has very strict laws about driving after you have been drinking alcohol. If the police stop you, they can take away your driver's licence. You may have to pay a fine or go to jail.

AirCare program

Air pollution is a big problem in the Vancouver area. More than 75 per cent of this pollution comes from cars. The B.C. government has a program to test cars for pollution. It is called the AirCare Program. Many cars and light trucks in the Lower Mainland must be tested every year before owners can renew their car licence and insurance. If your car does not pass the test, you

must get it repaired, or you will not be able to get your insurance and licence renewed.

For more information, look in the White Pages of the telephone book under "AirCare Information Hotline" or "ICBC."

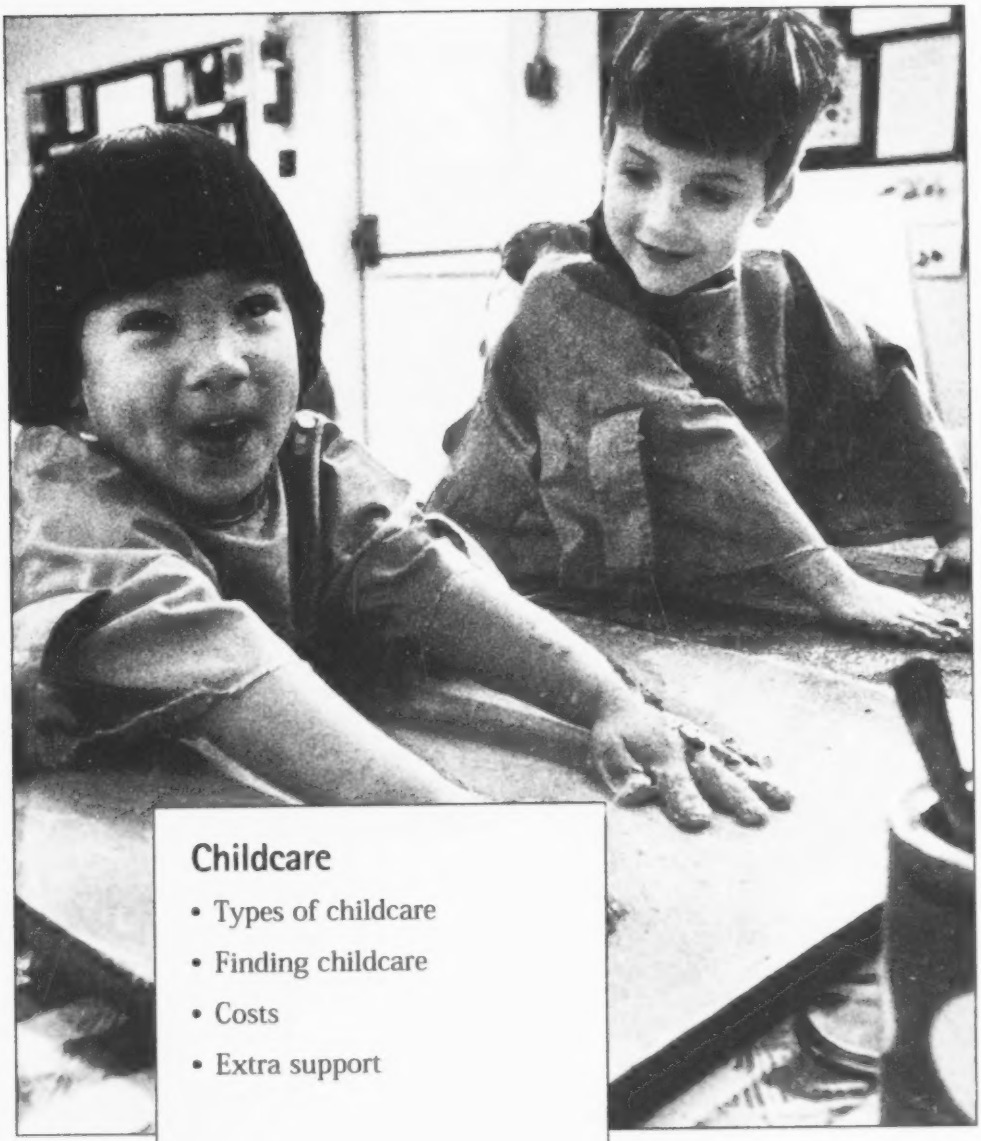
Winter car care

Some areas of the province have a lot of snow and very cold temperatures in the winter. It is important to get your car ready for winter driving. What do you need to do?

- Check the battery. Make sure it has enough water.
- Make sure you have antifreeze in the radiator. Have it tested so you know how cold it can be before it freezes.
- Put windshield wiper fluid in your windshield wiper reservoir. It won't freeze in cold weather.
- Get a block heater installed if your car doesn't already have one. This heater warms up your engine block before you start the car, so it is easier to start.
- Get good tires. Snow tires are best for deep snow. Many people use all season tires for hard snow on city streets. You can use these tires all year. Some roads outside cities have lots of snow and ice. The police may require your car to have snow tires or chains to travel on these roads.

You can talk to the people at your local garage or service station for information and advice about winter car care.

Childcare



Childcare

- Types of childcare
- Finding childcare
- Costs
- Extra support

Types of childcare

Parents who work or go to school may need someone to take care of their children. If you do not have a family member to take care of your children, several different kinds of childcare are available.

- Sometimes a caregiver takes care of children in the family's own home. This person may take care of your child all day or for a shorter time. Usually a caregiver who lives with the family is called a nanny.
- A family childcare home cares for babies and children. This kind of care is in the providers' home. You can take your child there every day.
- A childcare centre is often in a community centre, church or school. The workers have special training. Childcare centres are open all day. They take care of babies and children.
- A pre-school program provides learning activities and games for children for three hours a day or less. Pre-school programs are usually for children three to five years old.

- Out-of-school care is a program for school-age children at or near the school. It is before and after school and on school holidays. These programs are usually for children five to 12 years old.

Finding childcare

- There is a Child Care Resource and Referral Program in British Columbia for referrals to child care programs in your community. This program is funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development and your municipality. In Vancouver, the number to call is 604 709-5699. Website: www.wstcoast.org (It is listed in the White Pages of the telephone book under "Information Daycare"). Call

Enquiry B.C. (604 660-2421 in the Lower Mainland, 387-6121 in Victoria, and 1-800-663-7867 elsewhere in B.C.) to get the number of the agency in your area that has the referral information.

- If there is no Child Care Resource and Referral Program in your area, get a list of childcare centres and family childcare providers from the Health Department. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book, after the Government of British Columbia section, in the "Health Authorities" listings, for the address and telephone number of a Health Unit near you. Ask for the brochure called, *Child Daycare: A Parent's Guide to Choosing–A Licence Not Required Arrangement.*
- Look in the Yellow Pages of the phone book under "Day Care Centres" or "Pre-schools."
- Get advice from neighbours or immigrant settlement agencies.
- Look in the Classified Ads in the newspaper for caregivers, family childcare providers or child care centres.
- Look for ads on notice boards. Many places such as community centres, grocery stores and laundromats have notice boards.

You may need to talk with several people or visit many places to find childcare you like. You must make sure the child care you choose takes good care of your child. The Health Department of the provincial government checks childcare centres, out of school care, and licensed Family Childcare homes. The unlicensed day care providers registered with the Child Care Resource and Referral Program have had training and criminal checks.

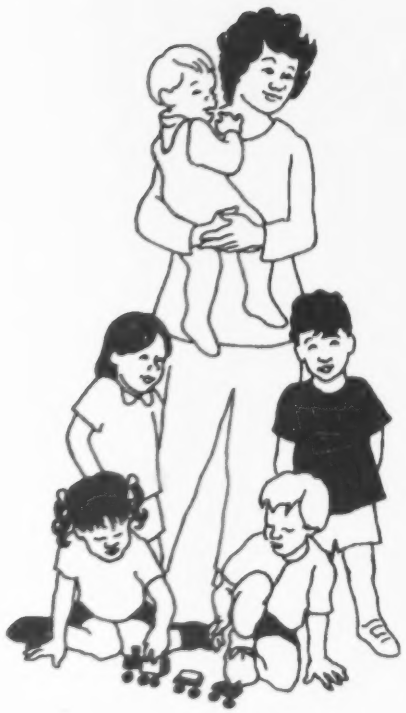
Costs

Full-time childcare is expensive. The provincial government may pay for all or part of the cost for some low-income families. This is called a "daycare subsidy."

To apply for a daycare subsidy, call the Ministry of Human Resources for more information. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book, in the Government of British Columbia section, under "Human Resources – Ministry of." Call the "General Enquiries" number (in Vancouver the number is 604 660-3224) to find

out which office handles subsidy applications in your area.

You can claim some of the money you spent on childcare on your income tax return. You will need your receipts and your babysitter's Social Insurance Number.



Learning English at pre-school

Young children learn English easily. Special pre-school programs can help children learn English before they start school. To find out if there is an English as a Second Language (ESL) pre-school program in your area, talk to an immigrant settlement agency.

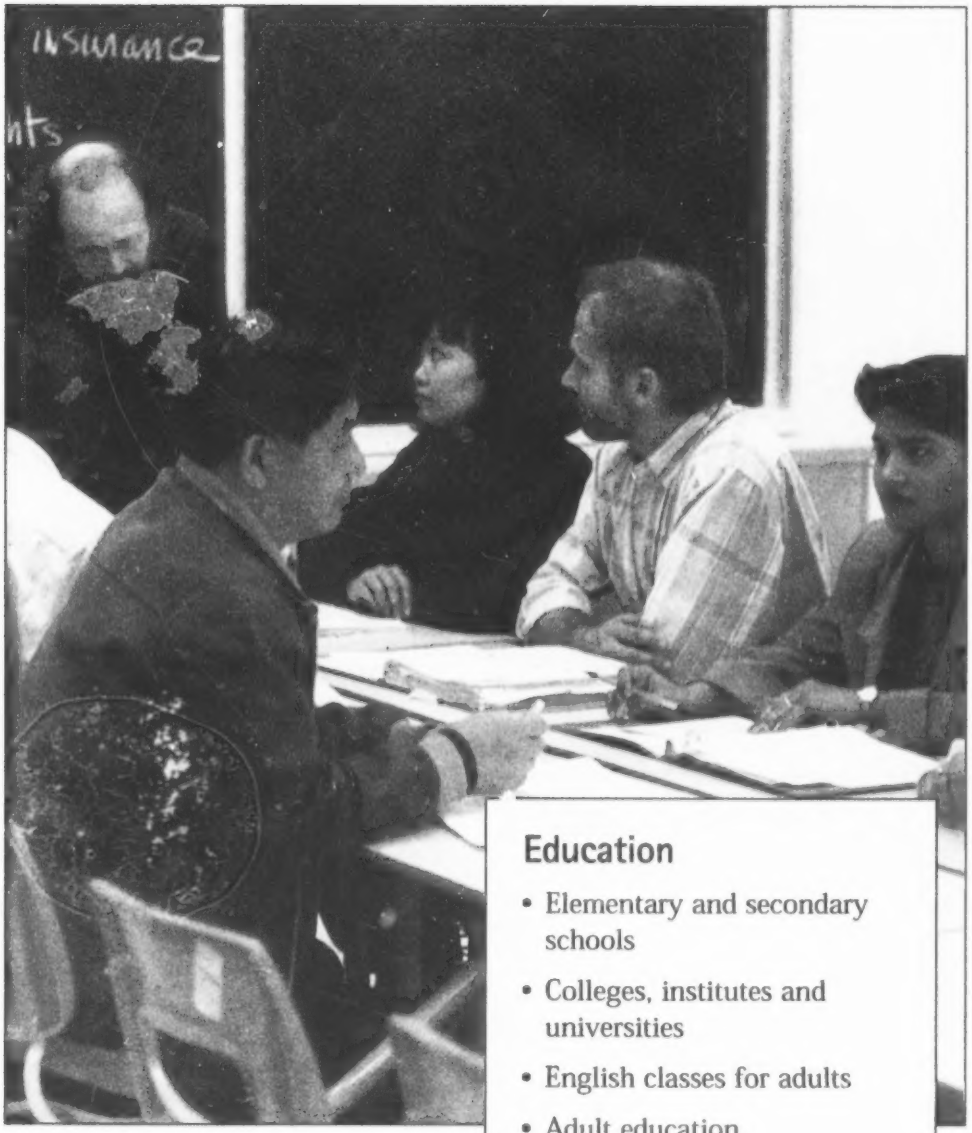
Children who need extra support

Some children need extra special care so they can attend childcare. They may have a physical disability or a learning problem. Call the Information Daycare number in your area to find out which daycare facilities can give your child the extra support they need.

Starting your own Childcare Program

What if you want to care for children? You need a licence to care for more than two children that are not your own. You do not need a licence for two children or less. Call the "Information Daycare" number, or the "Child Care Resource and Referral Program" number, or a Health Unit in your area for more information.

Education



Education

- Elementary and secondary schools
- Colleges, institutes and universities
- English classes for adults
- Adult education

Elementary and secondary schools

All children in B.C. between the ages of 5 and 16 must go to school. Public school is free. Some children go to private schools instead of public schools. Others study at home with lessons sent by mail.

Children begin school when they are about 5 years old. For children under 5 years old, there are preschools. Call your local Health Unit, or Information Daycare, or look in the Yellow Pages under "Pre-School Centres" for a list.

The first year of school is called kindergarten, and children attend only half-days. In elementary schools (Grades 1 to 6 or 7), many students are in multi-grade classes. For example, one class may have students from Grade 1 to Grade 3.

Most students finish high school by age 18, but some stay longer.

Registering a child for public school

To register a child for public school, phone your local School Board office (look in the White Pages under "Schools") or ask at the school nearest your home.

Learning English

Young children usually attend the public school nearest their home. Many older children go to a school that has a program to help them learn English. Many students first attend an English as a Second Language (ESL) class, full-time or part-time. Other students receive extra help with English in a regular class.

Getting involved

Schools encourage communication between teachers and parents. It is important for parents to attend parent-teacher interviews during the year. There are also opportunities to attend meetings and volunteer in the school.

Keeping your language

Many parents want their children to continue to learn their native language. In some places you may be able to find a preschool in your language. Also, there may be classes for elementary students after school or on Saturday. Many high schools offer a choice of language classes.

For information, call the B.C. Heritage Language Association at 604 298-4526. Website: www.bchla.org

Special needs

Some children need extra help. They may be blind or deaf or have another physical disability. Other children may need help because they learn slowly. Some children with special needs can attend regular classes. Others need special programs. Contact your local school board for information.

French

There are three different French programs in B.C. public schools. The Programme Cadre de Français is for students who speak French as their first language. The second is called the "French Immersion Program." It is for students who do not speak French. Students in this program spend the whole day or most of the day learning French. The third program is called "Core French." Students learn basic French as one of their regular subjects. For information, talk to your local school board.

Private schools

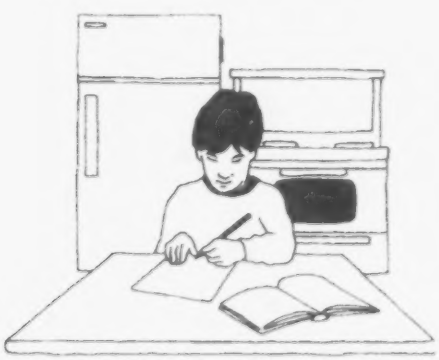
Some private schools are religious, such as Catholic schools or Muslim schools. Others may have different teaching methods or smaller class sizes. Most private schools charge fees. For a list of these schools, phone the Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools in Victoria at 250 356-2508. Website: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/independentschools. You can also look in the Yellow Pages of the phone book under "Schools" and find "Schools – Academic – Elementary and Secondary."

Distance education

Some children in B.C. don't go to regular schools. These children may live far from school, they may be very sick, or their parents may decide not to send them to school.

The Open Learning Agency and the provincial Ministry of Education, have a special program called "Open School" for children in kindergarten to Grade 12 who don't go to a regular school. These children can do their lessons by correspondence at home and mail them to a teacher to check.

For more information, call the Open Learning Agency or the Distance Education School in your area. The Open Learning Agency's telephone number is 604 431-3000 in the Lower Mainland, or call 1-800-663-1663 from elsewhere in B.C. The Greater Vancouver Distance Education School is listed in the White Pages of the telephone book under "School Board Vancouver – Community Education Services – Greater Vancouver Distance Education." The number is 604 713-5520. Website: www.gvdes.com



Open Learning Agency

The Open Learning Agency (OLA) provides courses by mail, TV, and telephone tutoring for people who cannot attend classes. There are high school, job training, English, and academic courses.

The OLA operates the International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES). ICES will assess foreign post-secondary certificates for employment. This service costs between $115 and $200.

Post-secondary educational institutions

There are public (government-funded) and private (not government-funded) universities, colleges, and institutes in British Columbia.

For a list of public colleges and institutes, look at the end of this chapter, or look in the Yellow Pages of the phone book under "Schools – Academic – Colleges and Universities." The Yellow Pages listing contains both public and private schools.

Costs and financial help

Public elementary and secondary schools are free. But public colleges, institutes, universities, and ESL for adults at school district continuing education centres charge fees.

Many students work part-time or work in the summers to earn money. The B.C. government gives loans to many students who need financial help. The government also pays the fees, and sometimes the living expenses, for low-income students in some programs. For information, talk to the Financial Aid office at the college, institute, or university you plan to attend.

Public universities, colleges and institutes

There are five public universities, 16 public colleges, and three public institutes in British Columbia.

Universities give degrees in many fields, such as the arts, science, medicine, or law. Universities do research and offer post-graduate degrees such as a Master's or a doctorate (Ph.D).

Public colleges offer first and second year university courses. Some colleges (university colleges) give full university degrees. Colleges and technical institutes also have many job training programs, such as accounting, nursing, or auto mechanics.

Private colleges and schools

British Columbia has many private colleges, business schools, and technical schools. The fees are sometimes higher than at public colleges.

To find private schools and colleges, look in the Yellow Pages of the phone book under "Schools." You can also contact the Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (PPSEC) to find out which schools are registered and/or accredited with the provincial government. Schools which are accredited have passed tests for standards of integrity and educational competence. You

can contact PPSEC in the Lower Mainland at 604 660-4400, or at 1-800-661-7441 elsewhere. Website: www.ppsec.bc.ca

English classes for adults

There are many English as a Second Language (ESL) classes available for adults to learn to speak, read, and write English.

Most immigrants are eligible for free government-sponsored ESL classes under the British Columbia Settlement and Adaptation Program (BCSAP). These free classes are called English Language Services for Adults (ELSA). Other people can attend a full-time or part-time class at a college or public school. They charge fees, but the provincial government may help pay the fees for many low-income people. Immigrant settlement agencies, community groups, and churches provide free or low-cost classes in some areas. There is often a waiting list for all of the above classes.

Many private English schools and private tutors also teach English. They may be more expensive than classes in public schools and colleges. Look in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Language Schools" for a listing of ESL schools.

For information on ESL classes, call a Language Assessment Centre, local college or school board, or an immigrant settlement agency. Language Assessment Centres are for the free ESL classes offered under the BCSAP. In the Lower Mainland, there are two Language Assessment Centres:

- For people living in Vancouver, Burnaby, Richmond, New Westminster, North Vancouver and West Vancouver, call Western ESL Services at 604 876-5756.
- For people living in Surrey, the Tri-Cities area and the Fraser Valley, call Timeline Data Solutions Ltd. at 604 507-4150.

Outside of the Lower Mainland, contact an immigrant settlement agency in your area.

Continuing education for adults

Many adults in British Columbia continue to study long after they leave school. Adults take courses to improve their reading or math skills, to finish high school, to learn new job skills, or for enjoyment. Many working people study part-time. There are classes in colleges and universities, in high schools in the evenings, and through the Open Learning Agency.

Many adults also attend full-time classes during the day. These classes are organized by School District Adult Learning Centres. Contact your local school district office for information.

For more information

Post-Secondary educational Institutions

UNIVERSITIES

University of British Columbia (UBC)
6328 Memorial Road
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1
Tel: 604 822-2211 Fax: 604 822-3134
Website: www.ubc.ca

Simon Fraser University (SFU)
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6
Tel: 604 291-3111 Fax: 604 291-4860
Website: www.sfu.ca

University of Victoria (UVic)
P.O. Box 1700 STN CSC
Victoria, B.C. V8W 2Y2
Tel: 250 721-7211 Fax: 250 721-7212
Website: www.uvic.ca

University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC)
3333 University Way
Prince George, B.C. V2N 4Z9
Tel: 250 960-5555 Fax: 250 960-6330
Website: www.unbc.ca

Royal Roads University
2005 Sooke Road
Victoria, B.C. V9B 5Y2
Tel: 250 391-2511 Fax: 250 391-2500
Website: www.royalroads.ca

COLLEGES

Camosun College
3100 Foul Bay Road
Victoria, B.C. V8P 5J2
Tel: 250 370-3000 Fax: 250 370-3551
Website: www.camosun.bc.ca

Capilano College
2055 Purcell Way
North Vancouver, B.C. V7J 3H5
Tel: 604 986-1911 Fax: 604 984-4985
Website: www.capcollege.bc.ca
(also in Sechelt and Squamish)

College of New Caledonia
3330 - 22nd Avenue
Prince George, B.C. V2N 1P8
Tel: 250 562-2131 Fax: 250 561-5861
Toll Free: 1-800-371-8111
Website: www.cnc.bc.ca
(also in Burns Lake, Mackenzie, Quesnel, Valemount and Vanderhoof)

College of the Rockies
2700 College Way Box 8500
Cranbrook, B.C. V1C 5L7
Tel: 250 489-2751 Fax: 250 489-1790
Website: www.cotr.bc.ca
(also in Creston, Fernie, Golden, Invermere and Sparwood)

Douglas College
P.O. Box 2503
New Westminster, B.C. V3L 5B2
Tel: 604 527-5400 Fax: 604 527-5095
Website: www.douglas.bc.ca
(also in Coquitlam and Maple Ridge)

Kwantlen University College
12666 - 72nd Avenue
Surrey, B.C. V3W 2M8
Tel: 604 599-2100 Fax: 604 599-2068
Website: www.kwantlen.bc.ca
(also in Langley and Richmond)

Langara College
100 West 49th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 2Z6
Tel: 604 323-5511 Fax: 604 323-5555
Website: www.langara.bc.ca

Malaspina University College
900 - 5th Street
Nanaimo, B.C. V9R 5S5
Tel: 250 753-3245 Fax: 250 740-6450
Website: www.mala.bc.ca
(also in Cowichan, Parksville/Qualicum and Powell River)

North Island College
2300 Ryan Road
Courtenay, B.C. V9N 8N6
Tel: 250 334-5000 Fax: 250 334-5018
Toll Free: 1-800-715-0914
Website: www.nic.bc.ca
(also in Ahousat, Bella Coola, Campbell River, Comox Valley, Cortes Island, Gold River, Port Alberni, Port Alice, Port Hardy, Port McNeill and Ucluelet)

Northern Lights College
11401 - 8th Street
Dawson Creek, B.C. V1G 4G2
Tel: 250 782-5251 Fax: 250 782-5233
Website: www.nlc.bc.ca
(also in Atlin, Chetwynd, Dease Lake, Fort Nelson, Fort St. John, Hudson's Hope and Tumbler Ridge)

Northwest Community College
5331 McConnell Avenue
Terrace, B.C. V8G 4X2
Tel: 250 635-6511 Fax: 250 638-5432
Website: www.nwcc.bc.ca
(also in Hazelton, Houston, Kitimat, Prince Rupert, Queen Charlotte City, Masset, Nass Valley, Smithers and Stewart)

Okanagan University College
3333 College Way
Kelowna, B.C. V1V 1V7
Tel: 250 762-5445 Fax: 250 862-5470
Website: www.ouc.bc.ca
(also in North Kelowna, Penticton, Salmon Arm and Vernon)

Selkirk College
Box 1200, 301 Frank Beinder Way
Castlegar, B.C. V1N 3J1
Tel: 250 365-7292 Fax: 250 365-6568
Website: www.selkirk.bc.ca
(also in Grand Forks, Kaslo, Kettle Valley, Nakusp, Nelson, Slocan Valley and Trail)

University College of the Cariboo
P.O. Box 3010, 900 McGill Road
Kamloops, B.C. V2C 5N3
Tel: 250 828-5000 Fax: 250 828-5086
Website: www.cariboo.bc.ca
(also in Ashcroft, Clearwater, Lillooet, Lytton, Merritt, 100 Mile House and Williams Lake)

University College of the Fraser Valley
33844 King Road
Abbotsford, B.C. V2S 7M8
Tel: 604 504-7441 Fax: 604 859-6653
Website: www.ucfv.bc.ca
(also in Agassiz, Chilliwack, Hope and Mission)

Vancouver Community College
1155 East Broadway
Vancouver, B.C. V5T 4V5
Tel: 604 871-7000 Fax: 604 871-7100
Website: www.vcc.bc.ca

INSTITUTES

British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT)
3700 Willingdon Avenue
Burnaby, B.C. V5G 3H2
Tel: 604 434-5734 Fax: 604 431-6917
Website: www.bcit.ca
(also in downtown Vancouver, Richmond and North Vancouver)

Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design
1399 Johnston Street, Granville Island
Vancouver, B.C. V6H 3R9
Tel: 604 844-3800 Fax: 604 844-3801
Website: www.eciad.bc.ca

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
4155 Belshaw Street
Merritt, B.C. V1K 1R1
Tel: 250 378-3300 Fax: 250 378-3332
Website: www.nvit.bc.ca

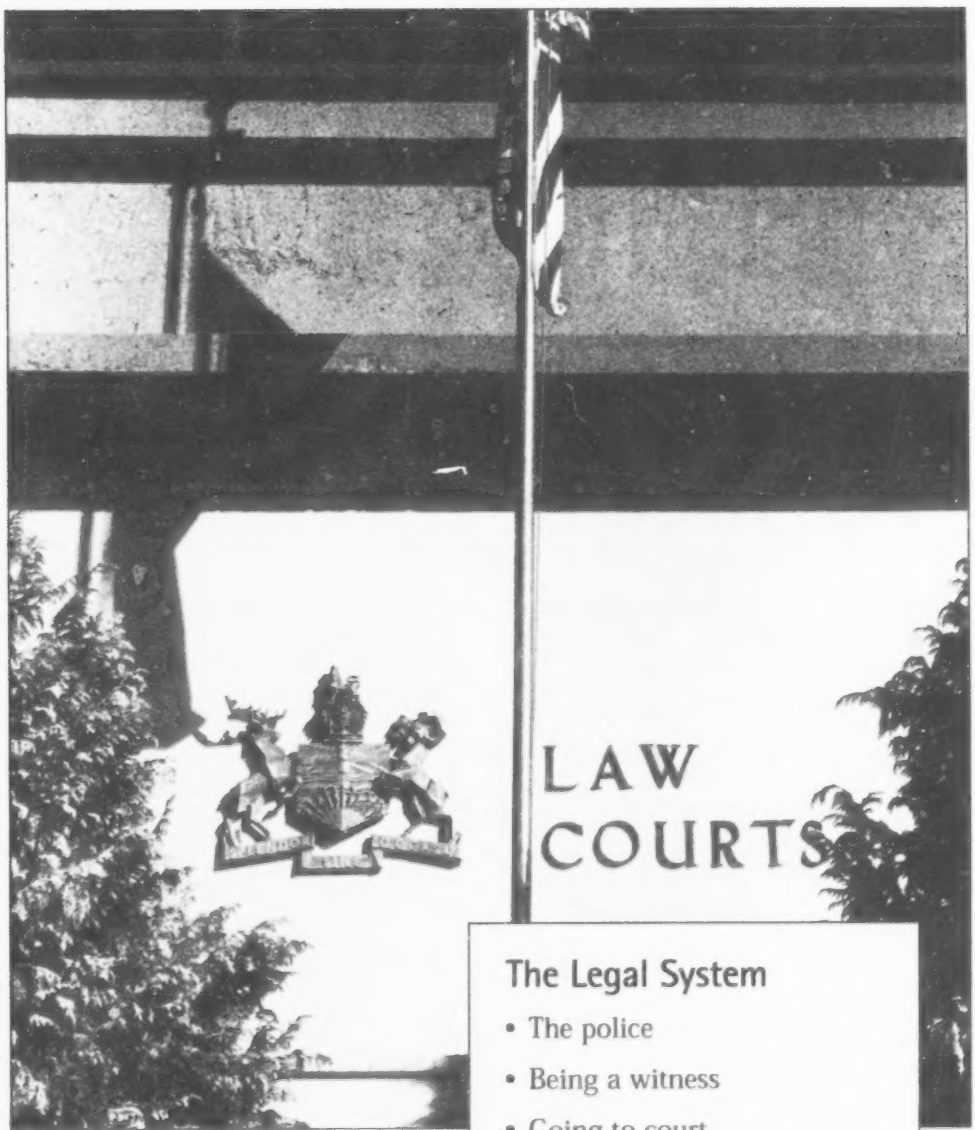
SPECIALIZED INSTITUTIONS

B.C. Open College and Open University
4355 Mathissi Place
Burnaby, B.C. V5G 4S8
Tel: 604 431-3000 Fax: 604 431-3333
Toll Free: 1-800-663-1663
Website: www.ola.bc.ca

Institute of Indigenous Government
3rd Floor, 1286 Homer Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 2Y5
Tel: 604 602-9555 Fax: 604 602-3400
Website: www.indigenous.bc.ca

Justice Institute of British Columbia
715 McBride Boulevard
New Westminster, B.C. V3L 5T4
Tel: 604 525-5422 Fax: 604 528-5518
Website: www.jibc.bc.ca

The Legal System



The Legal System

- The police
- Being a witness
- Going to court
- Finding a lawyer

Vancouver Police *R.C.M.P.*

The police

Some cities in British Columbia have their own police. But in most communities, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are the only police.

Role of the police in Canada

In Canada, the police are separate from the government and the army. The police are part of the community. Their duty is to protect the people in the community.

Calling the police

Some cities and towns have two telephone numbers for the police. One is an emergency number and the other is a non-emergency number.

Call the emergency number if you or someone else is hurt or in danger, or if you see a crime happening. In most areas of the province, the emergency number is 911. Look in the inside front cover of the telephone book for the number in your area.

Call the non-emergency number if no one is hurt or in danger. Look in the inside front cover of the telephone book for this number. If you are not sure which number to call, call the emergency number. Tell the police what is happening. They will decide if it is an emergency or not. You can call the police any time—day or night.

Hate crimes

What if a person hurts you or says they will hurt you because of your skin colour, religion, national origin, sex or sexual orientation? This is against the law. Call the police for help. You can also contact the B.C.

Hate Crime Team at 604 660-2659 or 1-800-563-0808.

Young people and the law

Sometimes children break the law. In Canada, there are special laws for children between 12 and 18 years old.

If a young person who is 12 to 17 years old goes to court on a criminal charge, he or she has the right to a lawyer.

Families with children in trouble with the law may contact probation officers or youth workers for advice. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book, in the Government of British Columbia section, under "Children and Family Development – Ministry for." Look for a "Youth Probation Services" listing in your area.

Being a witness

A person who sees something happen, such as a car accident or a crime, is called a witness. Witnesses are very important to Canadian law. The information a witness gives may help the police find a criminal or find out who caused an accident. If you are a witness, it is your duty to inform the police and appear in court if required. If you see a car accident, give your name and phone number to the driver.

Police arrests

What happens if a police officer arrests you? Police officers must identify themselves and show you their identification document or badge. They must explain why they are arresting you, and tell you what your rights are.

The officers must let you phone a lawyer right away. They have to let you talk to a lawyer alone.

What if you do not know a lawyer or cannot afford one? If you are in police custody or the police officer is asking you questions about a crime, ask the police officer for the Legal Aid phone number. The officer must give you the number and let you call them.

When the police officer asks, you should give your name and address. You don't have to say anything more until after you talk to a lawyer. Within 24 hours, the police must take you to court or let you go.

Going to court

In Canada, the government makes the law. The courts keep the law, but they are separate from the government. Everyone must obey Canada's laws. Members of the police, the army, and the government must also obey the law.

There are different types of courts, such as Traffic Court and Family Court, for different problems.

If you go to court, you can ask for an interpreter who speaks your language. For a criminal trial, people who speak French can ask for French language services. You must do this before the trial begins.

Finding a lawyer

If you have a legal problem, you may need a lawyer. Sometimes a lawyer can help you solve a problem before you go to court.

How to find a lawyer:

- Ask your friends.
- Talk to the people at an immigrant settlement agency.
- Contact the Lawyer Referral Service. This service will give you the name of a lawyer who will talk to you for up to 30 minutes for $10. The Lawyer Referral Service is run by the Canadian Bar Association. In Vancouver, call 604 687-3221. Elsewhere, call 1-800-663-1919. This service is listed in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Lawyer Referral/Regulation."

What if you cannot afford a lawyer?

Legal Aid – Look in the White Pages of the telephone book under "Legal Aid." Legal Aid is a free service for people with legal problems who cannot afford to pay a lawyer. It is administered by the Legal Services Society of B.C. The Legal Services

Society can also give you legal information over the phone on their Law Line. In the Lower Mainland, the Legal Services Society is 604 601-6000, and the Law Line is at 604 601-6100.

UBC Law Students Legal Advice Program – Law students, supervised by lawyers, give free law classes in many communities in the Vancouver area. Contact them at 604 822-5791.

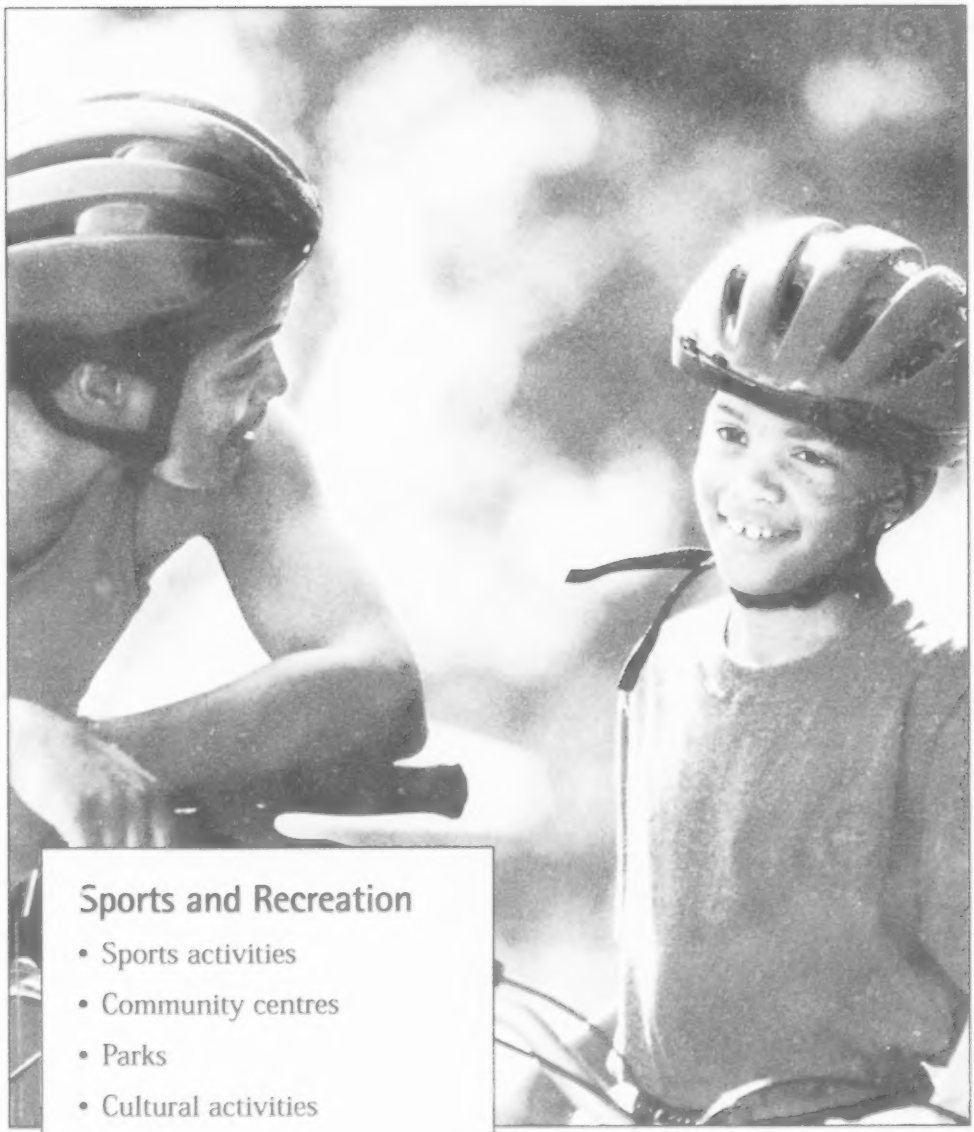
Dial-a-Law – You can phone Dial-a-Law for free information about the law. This is a library of tapes prepared by lawyers. In the Vancouver area, call 604 687-4680. Elsewhere in B.C., call 1-800-565-5297.

For more information

Law Courts Education Society – If you want to know how the court system in B.C. works, or to get pamphlets and information on the court system, you can contact the Law Courts Education Society. You can also arrange for a tour of your local court house. Call 604 660-9870 for information.

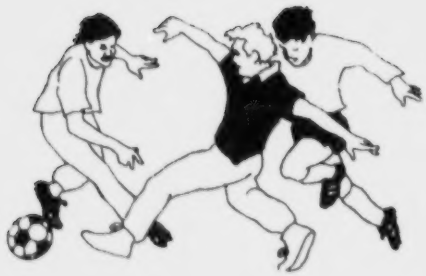
People's Law School – Contact the People's Law School if you want to arrange for a free law class in your community centre, school, or library. The People's Law School is located at 150-900 Howe Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2M4, telephone 604 688-2565. They can arrange classes anywhere in the province. They also have free publications available.

Sports and Recreation



Sports and Recreation

- Sports activities
- Community centres
- Parks
- Cultural activities
- Libraries



Sports activities

Many British Columbians enjoy sports. Some of these include running, rollerblading, swimming, golf, tennis, skiing, boating, cycling, hiking, fishing, and mountain climbing.

Team sports are also popular. Some of these include hockey, baseball, basketball, soccer, and curling.

Students play many of these sports at school. People can also go to public parks and community centres or join private sports clubs. For more information on private sports clubs, look in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Clubs."

Community centres

Most cities and towns have community centres. They usually have swimming pools, ice rinks, tennis courts, and playgrounds.

Community centres may have classes in arts and crafts, dancing, physical fitness, computers, and English as a Second Language (ESL). Each season, community centres usually publish a newspaper with a list of programs, their times, and how much they cost. Community centre programs are usually low in cost.

To find a community centre in your area, contact your local Parks and Recreation Board, or Recreation Commission. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book, in the "Municipalities" section. Look for the municipality you live in, and look for "Parks and Recreation," or "Recreation Facilities," or "Leisure Services."

Municipal parks

City or municipal parks usually have a sports field for baseball and soccer, a playground for children, and sometimes places for picnics.

Provincial parks and national parks

British Columbia has nearly 400 provincial parks and five national parks. Many of these are very large and have beautiful forests, rivers, mountains, and lakes.

People may visit provincial parks for hiking, camping, fishing, boating, and skiing.

Visitors should keep parks clean and safe. It is important to put all garbage in garbage cans. If there are no cans nearby, take your garbage home with you.

In British Columbia, it is against the law to drink alcohol in parks and other public places.

For more information on provincial parks, look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book. Find the Government of British Columbia section. Look under "Water, Land and Air Protection – Ministry of." For more information on national parks, look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book. Find the Government of Canada section. Look under "Canadian Heritage – Parks Canada."

Campgrounds and picnic sites

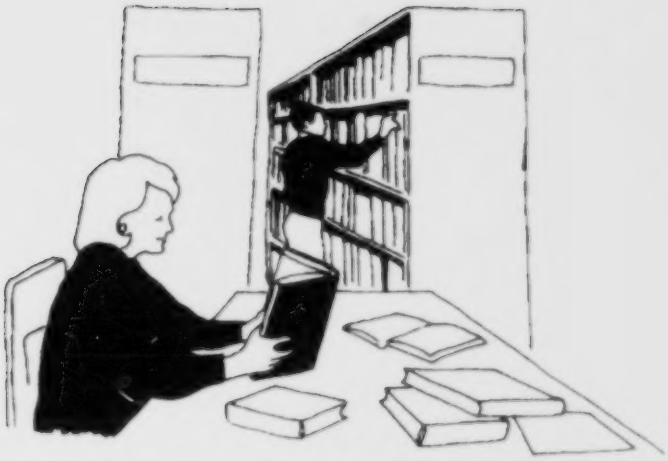
Most national and provincial parks have campgrounds and picnic sites. Campgrounds usually have campsites with a picnic table, a fire pit, and space for a tent or camper. People can camp overnight for a small fee. Picnic sites can be used only during the day. They are usually free.

Private campgrounds are common in all parts of the province. People can usually make reservations for a private campground. Most have services such as laundromats and grocery stores. Private campground fees are usually higher than fees at provincial or national campgrounds.

Cultural activities

British Columbia has many places for people to enjoy cultural activities. You can visit museums, art galleries, and historical sites. You can also go to plays, musicals, concerts, operas and ballets.

Some communities have their own special events such as festivals and fairs. You can get information about cultural activities in your area from newspapers, libraries and tourist information offices. For tourist



information, contact Tourism B.C. at 604 435-5622 in Greater Vancouver, or 1-800-435-5622. Website: www.hellobc.com. Your municipality may also have a Tourist Information office.

Most large cities have community arts councils. They can give you information on local arts and cultural groups, and events. To contact your local community arts council, look in the White Pages of the telephone book under "Community Arts Council."

Libraries

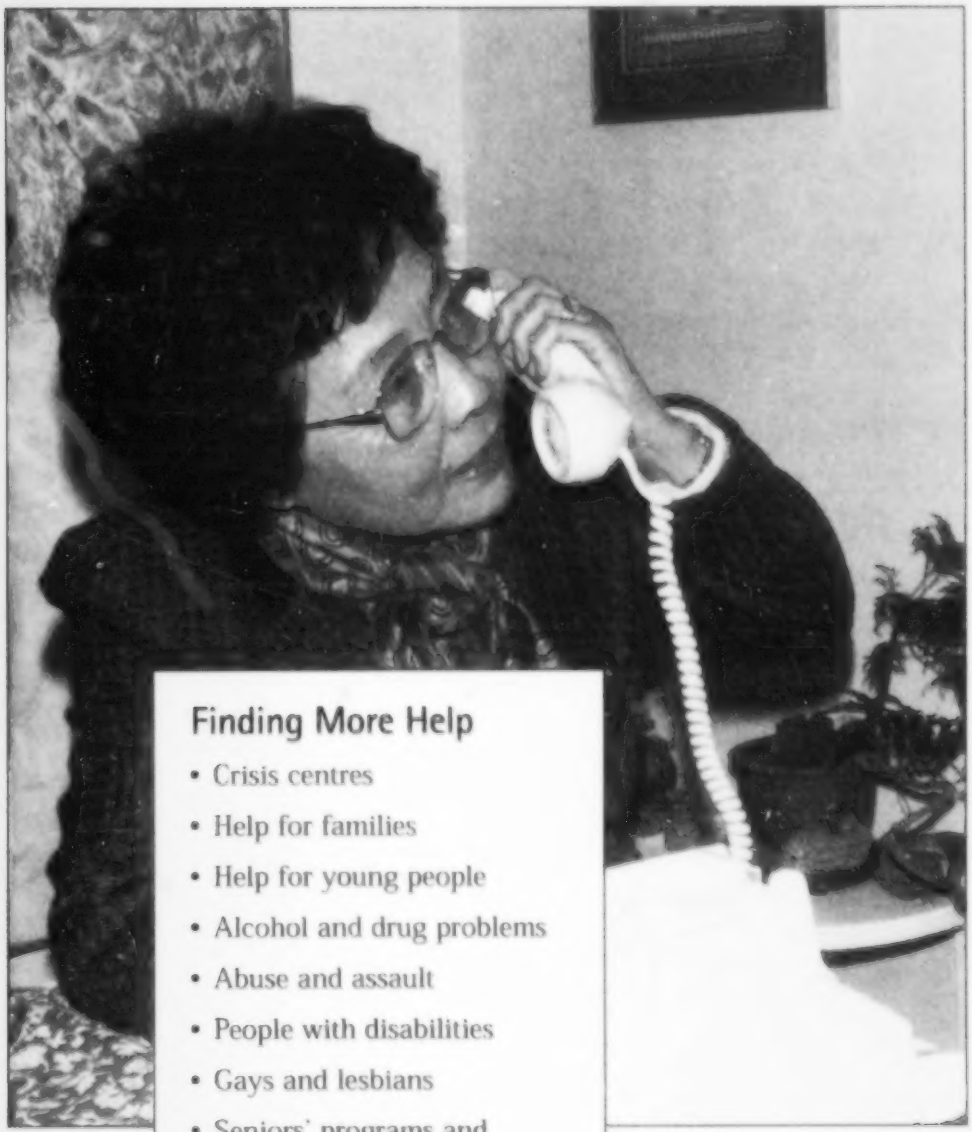
Most communities have public libraries. You can borrow books, magazines, records, and tapes from these libraries. Libraries have books for adults and children, easy-reading books, and books in many languages.

Many libraries have special services for people with disabilities. For example, a library may have talking books for blind people. Some libraries have activities for children, such as storytelling and crafts.

Public libraries are free. You need a library card to borrow books or other items. You can apply for a card at any library. Bring some identification (ID) with your name and address on it.

To find a public library in your area, look in the White or Yellow Pages of the telephone book under "Libraries." You can also look in the Blue Pages in the "Municipalities" section under "Libraries."

Finding More Help



Finding More Help

- Crisis centres
- Help for families
- Help for young people
- Alcohol and drug problems
- Abuse and assault
- People with disabilities
- Gays and lesbians
- Seniors' programs and benefits

How to find help

Private organizations and government offices in British Columbia can help in many ways. What if you want help, but don't know which group or office to ask?

- Call an information or referral service agency in your community to find a private, non-profit, or government organization which can help you. Look in the White Pages of your telephone book in the "Community Services" section in the front of the book.
- Call Enquiry B.C. for information about provincial government offices. In the Lower Mainland, the number is 604 660-2421. In Greater Victoria, the number is 387-6121. Elsewhere in B.C. the number is 1-800-663-7867. If you have a Telecommunications Device for the Hearing Impaired (TTY), phone 604 775-0303 in Vancouver, or 1-800-661-8773 outside of Vancouver. Enquiry B.C. can transfer you toll-free to offices outside of your local dialing area.
- Ask at your local Government Agents office. There is a Government Agents office in most cities and towns outside Vancouver and Victoria. Look in the Blue Pages of the phone book. Find the Government of B.C. section. Look under "Government Agents."
- Call Reference Canada for information about federal government offices. The number is 1-800-622-6232. If you have a Telecommunications Device for the Hearing Impaired (TTY), phone 1-800-465-7735. Website: www.canada.gc.ca.

Crisis Centres

Sometimes people get extremely sad or upset. Some people may think about harming themselves or others. Most B.C. communities have crisis centres to help people experiencing severe depression, suicidal thoughts, physical or mental abuse, or family or marital distress. The crisis centre number is on the inside front cover of the White Pages of the telephone book.

Help for victims of torture

Some people were tortured before coming to Canada. There is a group in Vancouver which gives support and counselling to these people and their families. Contact the Vancouver

Association for Survivors of Torture (VAST) at 604 299-3539.

Help for families

In Canada, parents are legally responsible for their children up to the age of 19. The government has social workers to help families with problems. Look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book, in the Government of British Columbia section, under "Children and Family Development – Ministry of."

Help for young people

Many communities have agencies with special counsellors to help young people. Counsellors can answer questions and give advice about pregnancy, drugs, sexual diseases, and other problems. Contact the nearest public health unit. See the Blue Pages of the telephone book, after the Government of British Columbia section, in the "Health Authorities" listing.

There are community agencies to help children and young people. Big Sisters and Big Brothers match an adult and a child so that they can do things together. Boys' and Girls' Clubs help young people in other ways.

Alcohol and drug problems

To find an agency in your community that helps with these problems, call the Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Line. In Vancouver, the number is 604 660-9382. Outside of the Lower Mainland, the number is 1-800-663-1441. You can phone these numbers 24 hours a day. You can also look in the Blue Pages of the telephone book, in the Government of British Columbia section, under "Addiction Services."

There are also prevention programs to help people before drugs and alcohol become a problem. Schools have special programs and counsellors. Many community agencies such as Boys' and Girls' Clubs have support groups. To find an agency in your community, call the Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Line.

Child abuse and neglect

Sometimes parents don't take proper care of their children. They may hit them or leave young children at home alone. There are laws to protect children in these situations.

If you think a child needs help, call the Helpline for Children. Dial 0

(zero). Ask for "Zenith 1234." You can phone this number 24 hours a day.

The government may send a social worker to check on a child. If the social worker thinks the child is in danger, they can take the child out of the home to a safe place. If this happens, the parents should get legal help immediately. (See the chapter on "the Legal System").

Wife or husband abuse

Wife or husband abuse is against the law in Canada. There are many ways someone can abuse their spouse (wife or husband). For example, slapping or hitting the person, not letting the person go out of the house, or saying that they will take away the children are abuse.

The police can arrest someone who abuses their wife or husband. That person could get a fine or go to jail.

If a person is a permanent resident of Canada, that person will not be deported if they leave an abusive wife or husband.

What can you do if you need help?

- Call a crisis centre. See the inside front cover of your telephone book.
- Call the Victims' Information Line at 1-800-563-0808. They can give you information and referrals to agencies and services to help you.
- Go to a transition house. A transition house gives safe, free, emergency care to abused women and their children. You can get food, shelter, and medical help. You can also get counselling and help in finding an interpreter. Look in the White Pages of the telephone book under "Transition Houses."
- In the Lower Mainland, call Multicultural Family Support Services at 604 436-1025. This agency has counsellors for women and children in situations of family violence.
- Call the police.

Assault

It is against the law for someone to assault you. What is assault? If someone hits or hurts you, that is assault. If someone says he or she will hit you or hurt you, and you believe that person will do it, that is assault. Call the police if this happens to you.

Rape

What if you have been raped? Call a sexual assault centre. People at these centres give information and advice. The number is on the inside front cover of the telephone book. You may also want to call the police.

People with disabilities

People with disabilities may need information about housing or jobs. They also may want to know what special programs are available in their communities. For information and advice, call the Ministry of Health Services Information Line at 1-800-465-4911 or the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities at 604 875-0188.

Gays and lesbians

Homosexual immigrants may want information or advice. You can contact a community health unit in your area, or a local gay and lesbian organization.

In Vancouver, call the Gay, Lesbian, Transgendered, and Bisexual Community Centre at 604 684-5307 or the Helpline at 604 684-6869. Outside of Vancouver, call 1-800-566-1170.

Seniors' programs and benefits

Most communities in B.C. have seniors' groups. These groups usually have programs and activities for seniors. Some have special services such as counselling, medical clinics, entertainment, and legal advice.

For information on seniors' programs, contact the Office of the Special Advisor for Women's and Seniors' Health at 250 952-2256, or call Enquiry B.C. Ask for their free booklet *Information for Seniors–Your Guide to Programs and Benefits in British Columbia.*

For information on local seniors groups and activities in your area, contact your local community centre.

Seniors may get into many places for free or for less money if they show their Gold CareCard. These places may include provincial parks, art galleries, museums, movies, theatres, hotels, and restaurants. Seniors may also get special low rates on buses, ferries, trains, and airplanes.

Financial help for seniors

Canada Pension Plan (CPP) – When you work, a small amount of money

is deducted from your pay cheque each month. The money goes to the federal government so that when you retire, you get a government pension every month.

Old Age Security Pensions – The federal and provincial governments also give pensions to all seniors. It doesn't matter if you worked or not. You must apply for this pension when you are 65 years old. You must have lived in Canada for 10 years before you can apply. (The minimum residence can be less than 10 years, if you lived or worked in a country that has a social security agreement on pensions with Canada).

Guaranteed Income Supplement – People who get Old Age Security but have little or no other income may also qualify for the Guaranteed Income Supplement. The amount is determined by the income of you and your spouse. For more information, call the Canada Pension and Old Age Security Enquiry line at 1-800-277-9914.

Seniors Supplement – People who get Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement may also qualify for the provincial government's Seniors Supplement. You will receive the Seniors Supplement automatically if you are eligible. The amount depends on your income. For more information, call 604 682-0391 from the Lower Mainland, 387-4331 in Victoria, or 1-800-665-2656 from elsewhere in B.C.

In Canada, many people use short forms made from the first letters of the words in a group of words. Sometimes we say these letter by letter. For example, we say "E-S-L" for "English as a Second Language." These abbreviations are pronounced letter by letter:

B.C.	British Columbia
BCSAP	British Columbia Settlement and Adaptation Program
CPP	Canada Pension Plan
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
EI	Employment Insurance
ESL	English as a Second Language
GIC	Guaranteed Investment Certificate
GST	Goods and Services Tax
ICBC	Insurance Corporation of British Columbia
ID	Identification
IFH	Interim Federal Health
MSP	Medical Services Plan
OLA	Open Learning Agency
PST	Provincial Sales Tax
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RRSP	Registered Retirement Savings Plan
TV	Television
WCB	Workers' Compensation Board
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Sometimes we pronounce these short forms as a word. For example, we say the word CANN for Community Airport Newcomers' Network. These acronyms are pronounced as words:

CANN	Community Airport Newcomers' Network
ICES	International Credential Evaluation Service
SAFER	Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters
SIN	Social Insurance Number

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